Doctoral Thesis

British Intellectuals and Blairism: Counter-Hegemonic Voices during Tony Blair's Premiership

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Departamento de Filoloxía Inglesa e Alemá

Facultade de Filoloxía, Santiago

Universidade de Santiago de Compostela

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Signature: .....

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To my family for their love,
support and encouragement—especially to my parents

To my precious friends around the world,
my second family wherever I go

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Abstract: This study looks into the subversive cultural production of British intellectuals against the government of Tony Blair. My dissertation explores how the writers, thinkers and cultural figures of the time who openly reacted against the government of Margaret Thatcher and her controversial cuts in public services, such as education and culture, gradually experienced disenchantment with the politics of the newly elected Labour leader. The messianic politician, popularly acclaimed by the masses in 1997, soon became the target of left-wing intellectuals who criticised his deconstruction of socialist values and the old principles of the Labour Party. The analysis of these socio-cultural changes takes place through the study of a corpus of textual and cultural constructs produced by the most significant intellectuals of the time, who publicly denounced Blair's government.

Resumen: Este estudio representa un análisis de la producción cultural subversiva de los intelectuales británicos contra el gobierno de Tony Blair. Veremos como los intelectuales de la época—escritores, pensadores y otras personalidades de la escena cultural que abiertamente reaccionaron antes los recortes en servicios públicos durante los gobiernos de Margaret Thatcher—sufrieron un desencanto ante las políticas del recién elegido líder del Partido Laborista, Tony Blair. El primer ministro, muy aclamado por el pueblo británico en 1997, pronto se convirtió en objeto de crítica por parte de intelectuales de izquierdas que denunciaban el abandono de los principios socialistas del Nuevo Laborismo. El material de trabajo lo constituirá un corpus formado por obras literarias, artículos periodísticos, ensayos y otros productos culturales en donde se exponen las opiniones que generó en los intelectuales el gobierno laborista de Tony Blair en los años de su mandato.

Resumo: Este estudo representa unha análise da produción cultural subversiva dos intelectuais británicos contra o goberno de Tony Blair. Veremos coma os intelectuais da época—escritores, pensadores e outras personalidades da escena cultural que reaccionaran fronte aos recortes en servizos públicos durante os gobernos de Margaret Thatcher—sufriron un desencanto fronte ás políticas de Tony Blair. O primeiro ministro, moi gabado polo pobo británico en 1997, convertiuse cedo no obxecto de crítica dos intelectuais de esquerdas que denunciaban o abandono dos principios socialistas do Novo Laborismo. O material de traballo estará constituido por un corpus formado por obras literarias, artigos xornalísticos e ensaios, todos eles produción culturais dos círculos intelectuais británicos da época, onde se expoñen as opinións que xeran nos escritores o goberno laborista de Tony Blair nos anos do seu mandato.

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INTRODUCTION

There exists a recurrent scepticism that has often disqualified the insurgent action of the contemporary intellectual, and claiming the demise of the intellectual at the end of the twentieth century, some critics have underestimated the social function that writers, thinkers and other subversive figures have accomplished in recent years. The so-called *death of the intellectual* seems to have spread throughout Europe, and more concretely in France (Jennings, 2000: 829); however, it is frequently asserted that such an organised political action never existed in Britain. The following statement by Chris Rojek seems to encapsulate the state of affairs:

> There is no radical intelligentsia in England if we mean by the term a disciplined movement, attached to a systematic programme of political, economic and cultural transformation, with strong roots in the organized labour movement. English radicals tend to be *declassé* and strongly individualistic. Modishness is part of the job. (2003: 26)

The challenges of history, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fall of communism and the decadence of the left in the 1980s—the time of the neoliberal upsurge exemplified by the prototypical governments of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher—fragmented established ideological schemes, and the rebel intellectual, who had been traditionally linked to the left, found himself in the vacuum of political action. Jean-François Lyotard, with his iconic "Tombeau de l'intellectuel" (*Le Monde*, 1983), contributed to contemporary discourses by Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault that

identified the classical intellectually-committed writer with a past world, and some twenty-first century critics joined this observation with a discouraging and sometimes melancholic interpretation of the intellectual: Terry Eagleton and Andrew Marr, among others, have argued that intellectuals of the left have very much disappeared from the political scene (Marr, 1996; Eagleton, 2008).

Moreover, the idiosyncrasy of the British context—often thought to lack authentic radicalism—has been frequently defined in terms of a middle-class liberalism and thus too detached from the working class or from the subjugated other. British writers and thinkers have been disparaged for pretending to occupy a counter-hegemonic position, with apparently subversive writings, whilst unconsciously reproducing a dominant conservatism from an elitist position (Driscoll, 2009:14-17).

In view of the above, this dissertation aims to deconstruct those pessimistic views that claim that there is no such thing as a subversive intellectual in contemporary society. Despite widely accepted affirmations that state that the intellectual, "the great writer" of the twentieth century was disappearing (Foucault, 1980: 129), this study will show that another type of intellectual has begun to be established. A broader and more positive reading of current political action that opposes this negative, critical position is being exerted by a number of contemporary public voices. As Michel Foucault stated, although the concept of the old intellectual seems to be extinct, there are new voices that are currently carrying out the insurgent function of the supposedly old and anachronistic great thinker (129). As will be subsequently shown, these new intellectual voices represent a hybrid type of intellectual that negotiates the boundaries between high and low cultural forms. In some cases, their social accommodation and their apparently bourgeois backgrounds elicit criticism on the basis that they are organically incapable of producing subversive writings; likewise, their popular and commercial origins, as well as their sometimes vulgar or unrefined styles, also exclude these figures from official recognition. In this sense, this study will be an attempt to demonstrate that the existing prejudices against the current oppositional intellectual actually impede the identification of such figures who either become invisible, or are denied credit and prestige.

Secondly, and most importantly, this dissertation will examine the state of intelligentsia in the specific context of Great Britain during the government of Tony Blair and thus analyse the critical reactions of British intellectuals to the outcome of Blairism. In the face of criticism that underestimates the existence of the British

intellectual, this study aims to demonstrate that there are operative intellectuals in Britain who have been capable of producing subversive writing by effectively generating counter-hegemonic responses to the established power at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and concretely, to the legitimised hegemony of Tony Blair's government (1997—2007).

Historically, it has been argued that after the turbulent years of Thatcherism—an era well known for the categorical opposition of left-wing intellectuals to Thatcher's cuts in public services—the 1990s of John Major and Tony Blair symbolised "the exhaustion of the avant-garde" (Luckhurst, 2005: 78) and were characterised by political apathy, *the pessimism of the intellect* (Thompson, 2007), and a sometimes timid support for the rising New Labour. The present study articulates a critical response to this view: while there seemed to be, in fact, a period of transition that featured the intellectuals' relative political calm, the government of Tony Blair quickly reverted this tendency and provoked categorical attacks from the British left. Initially, Blair's modernisation of the Labour Party and its transformation into the "New Labour, New Britain" inspired both enthusiasm and sceptical support among a number of intellectuals. Despite early glimpses of an embryonic conservatism in Blair's project, it was widely believed that New Labour was the best alternative and offered a chance to take the Tories out of power. However, as will be demonstrated in this historical-chronological account of intellectuals and Blairism, there was soon a growing disenchantment with Labour policies, as it was gradually perceived that the New Dawn—as the rise of New Labour was popularly known—was virtually a continuation of Thatcherism, turning initial hopes into frustration, anger and disappointment.

This dissertation thus has two principal aims: on the one hand, it will propose the first historical-cultural chronicle of the intellectual during Tony Blair's premiership in order to show the curve of disenchantment that liberal voices experienced throughout Blair's ten years in office; and on the other, it will contribute to discourses on the state of the oppositional intellectual at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In order to accomplish the above-mentioned goals, this dissertation also articulates a number of essential subordinate questions: Who were those defiant intellectuals that publicly opposed and tried to deconstruct the Blairite discourse? How did they actually perform this opposition? What subversive texts did they write, and what subversive actions did they take? And, most importantly, why have they been considered *contre-pouvoir* voices during the Blair years?

As Edward Said has argued, there have been numerous studies about intellectuals, about what it means to be an intellectual, and the intellectual's role in our contemporary societies. However, scarce attention has been paid to those activities that classify intellectuals as such; that is, "not enough stock [has been] taken of the image, the signature, the actual intervention and performance, all of which taken together constitute the very lifeblood of every real intellectual" (Said, 1996: 13). Thus, when Said identifies a person as an intellectual, he recalls the circumstances that have made him/her worthy of such recognition. Sartre, for instance, became a reputed intellectual because of his circumstances, circumstances in which he exposed his "personal mannerisms, the sense of an important personal stake, the sheer effort, risk, will to say things about colonialism, or about commitment, or about social conflict that infuriated his opponents and galvanized his friends and perhaps even embarrassed him retrospectively" (13). This dissertation builds off of filling Said's claim of highlighting what intellectuals actually do—i.e. opposing accepted political, cultural, and ideological discourses—to be identified as oppositional voices within their particular historical circumstances. In this respect, this study will reflect on the concrete performance and interventions of a group of British intellectuals who opposed the outcome of the Blair project and who publicly stepped forward and signed, with diverse texts and cultural products, the resistance to the established power from 1997 to 2007. I will discuss who these intellectuals were, their intellectual and artistic background, and the reasons for their classification as oppositional intellectuals according to the definitions and the theoretical discourses of three relevant theorists of the intelligentsia in contemporary thinking: Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault and Edward Said. The selection of intellectuals here included will be analysed in terms of their functionality as counter-hegemonic and subversive voices, and in terms of their functional dissidence with respect to the politics of Tony Blair.

In order to accomplish the aforementioned aims and the stated critical questions, this dissertation is structured taking in mind the factors that may effectively guide this analysis. This dissertation is thus divided as follows: chapter one briefly introduces a number of key theoretical concepts of the methodological approach that informs my analysis, as well as the criteria used to select the intellectuals and texts here included. In this respect, my analysis will largely draw from particular concepts as developed by Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault and Edward Said. As will be explained, these authors have participated in the definition of the intellectual, and according to their

descriptions and criteria, a number of critical figures have been selected in this dissertation to represent the oppositional function of the intellectual as counter-hegemonic voices during Blair's premiership. Gramsci's concept of the "organic intellectual" will be essential to understanding the social and political *function* of the intellectuals here included, meaning that it will be their insurrectional activity and their aspiration to challenge the established hegemony that will determine their function as "counter-hegemonic" voices. Also, Foucault's notion of *Power/Knowledge* will be used to understand the relationship between intellectuals and power, and to analyse the function of the new type of intellectual—what Foucault called the "specific intellectual"—understood as a politically engaged figure willing to contest power by participating in "counter-power" and "anti-authority" struggles. Foucault's concept of the intellectual will be considered in this dissertation as intrinsically insurrectional and primarily determinant of his/her social and political *function*. Finally, Said's representation of the intellectual emphasises the latter's political commitment, and claims for the "amateurism" of the contemporary intellectual who, by personal conviction and as an outsider or "peripheral voice," intimidates power and becomes the challenger of the status quo.

Additionally, it is also necessary to look at the criteria used for the selection of texts/cultural products that served these oppositional voices to actually express their political dissidence. The diversity of these texts/political actions responds to the eclectic and comprehensive approach of this dissertation for, as has already been mentioned, it is one of the aims of this study to present an all-inclusive corpus of texts and cultural products in order to claim for validation, and to show the diversity of critical responses to Blairism. From this perspective, it is necessary to look at the following study from the scope of Cultural Studies, since it will be the "interdisciplinarity" of this field what will help understand the eclecticism of the texts. In tune with different authors of this area of knowledge (Raymond Williams, Fredric Jameson, Susan Basnett), there is a need to study and examine reality as a result of the fluctuation of many different disciplines, thus yielding a "transdisciplinary" study of culture (Hardt and Weeks, 2001: 2). This dissertation thus analyses many different kinds of textual and cultural products, including those that are normally discredited as low culture constructs or popular means of communication. Moreover, this approach to Cultural Studies permits us to understand culture—and any cultural text—as a "political construct," and foments politically engaged readings of culture (Walton, 2006: 118).

Chapters two and three entail two historical overviews of both the politics of Blairism and the tradition of the British intelligentsia during the twentieth century. These historical chapters constitute the preliminary research that provided the necessary knowledge and perspective to carry out a study on intellectuals and Blairism. Chapter two thus presents Tony Blair's politics from 1997 to 2007: in order to understand the reactions of intellectuals to the reforms that were implemented during Blair's time in office, it has been necessary to address some of Blair's major political tenets from the early constitution of his New Labour project, to his electoral triumph in 1997, as well as his three terms in power and his eventual resignation in 2007. Initially, Blair's ideological modernisation—the so-called Third Way—turned the decadent Labour Party into an electable entity that won three consecutive general elections (1997, 2001, 2005) making Labour the "natural party of government" (Cronin, 2004: 5). Despite some initial achievements that favoured Blair's popularity in his first term (mainly the peace process in Northern Ireland, and the devolution of regional power to Scotland and Wales), the new Labour Party configured itself as the consolidation of the neoliberal approach to economics and public services, and Blairism was ultimately considered the continuation of Thatcher's capitalism. Subsequent measures in Britain's domestic affairs, and other controversial decisions—such as Blair's determination to follow the United States in the Iraq war—caused intensive popular, intellectual and artistic criticism, revealing a widespread disenchantment of Labour supporters with their government.

Many public voices rose to openly criticise the weaknesses of Blair's politics, especially those decisions that contradicted the social and moral ethics that had previously nourished the ideology of the Labour Party. These subversive reactions would continue the existing criticism of many twentieth-century British intellectuals that had, broadly speaking, helped dismantle power discourses in every previous historical moment. Therefore, chapter three offers an overview of the activity of some major twentieth-century British intellectuals that were passionately committed to the universal values of truth and justice. In this direction, in order to analyse the position of present-day intellectuals with a broader perspective, it was necessary to study the historical tradition of intellectuals in twentieth-century Britain. As will be shown, these intellectuals fought against Fascism in the 1930s, with writers such as W.H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, George Orwell and Stephen Spender actively defending the values of democracy and freedom. Later intellectuals also tried to respond to totalitarian

regimes—namely the Soviet Union in the 1950s, the rise of capitalism in the 1970s and the hegemonic neoliberalism of the 1980s—and figures such as Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, and Eric Hobsbawm in the 1950s, writers such as Harold Pinter, Iris Murdoch, Howard Brenton, or David Hare in the 1960s and 1970s, and others such as Margaret Drabble, Ian McEwan, Hanif Kureishi or Martin Amis in the 1980s contributed to fight different structures of power by claiming a new concept of humanism, as well as social reforms, redistribution of wealth and the protection of the poorest sectors of society.

In tune with this nonconformist attitude, chapter three also clears the ground for a description of the situation of British intellectuals in the twenty-first century, and more concretely of how contemporary intellectuals continued this tradition of intellectual dissidence during the Blair years. Although these twentieth- and twenty-first century intellectuals proved to have different degrees of political commitment—some of them were more radical than others—they all seem to exert a determinant social and political function in their own particular contexts.

After this preparatory research, three chapters of analysis will follow that accomplish this project's stated objectives. These chapters provide analysis of a number of intellectuals, as well as their critical texts and cultural products, in order to show their gradual disenchantment with the government of Tony Blair, and, as already mentioned, to contribute to the debate of the state of the intelligentsia at the beginning of the twenty-first century. These intellectuals are categorised into three distinct groups. A first group consists of fiction writers, novelists and playwrights who actively participated in the political debate of their time either through public statements in interviews and newspaper columns, or through fictional representations in their writings. A second group of intellectuals includes theorists and critics who considered ideological questions within the state of the British left at the turn of the twenty-first century and who participated in newspaper, journal and magazine discussions over the role of the Labour Party and the Blair government. Finally, a third group of committed public figures consists of artists who also raised their voice to criticise a government that had initially inspired enthusiasm and optimism, but that soon provoked discontent and hostility among supporters.

The selection and classification of intellectuals into the three aforementioned groups responds to the methodological criteria of the present analysis. On the one hand, these intellectuals, and their critical responses to Blairism, have been grouped according

to their professions, which will constitute the methodological basis of analysis when dealing separately with literature, theory and the arts. On the other hand, the inclusion of such seemingly diverse individuals across the three groups owes to the concept of intellectual as is understood in this study, which refers to all kinds of oppositional writers, critics, thinkers and cultural figures that exerted the public function of deconstructing Blair's power. They are dissident and nonconformist voices that openly denounced the injustices and incongruences of Blair's premiership, and they have been included in this study because of their qualification to exert an opposition to the established power during Blair's government. As will be shown in the following analysis, some of these intellectuals perform the counter-hegemonic function that is expected of the subversive intellectual; others, however, despite belonging to the tradition of the liberal intelligentsia, seem to not adjust to the counter-power criterion that guides this study, but instead, they appear more complicit with the government than oppositional to it. Moreover, it has been necessary to incorporate an all-inclusive variety of oppositional figures—from all spheres of knowledge and the arts—to show that many different kinds of voices should be regarded with official recognition when analysing the state of contemporary intellectuals.

Hence, chapter four will focus on the fiction writers that openly opposed Blair's government and his official discourse. These writers would react with their literature and other public declarations—as shown in numerous interviews, opinion essays and other political actions—to Blair's modernisation project in the 1990s. Early satire and different forms of journalistic criticism by writers such as Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, Margaret Drabble, Harold Pinter and Fay Weldon will constitute the first samples of criticism of a young Prime Minister that, despite his popularity, very soon raised discontent among writers with leftist-liberal affinities. Blair's second term and his reforms in the domestic agenda also provoked the reaction of writers such as Sue Townsend and Jonathan Coe, who complained that the effects of Blair's reforms damaged public services and thus questioned Blair's alleged position as a Labour politician. However, it would be the Iraq war that would elicit the angriest opposition in British society. Scholars, experts, writers and thinkers coordinated collective responses to oppose the war—such as the debate held on the online platform *openDemocracy* in 2003—whilst others reflected their discontent in their literature. Such was the case of Sue Townsend and Robert Harris who—like many others—publicly questioned the legality of the invasion in their novels. Other writers, such as Ian McEwan, were to

remain sceptical and ambiguous in such a delicate and controversial issue. By the end of the premiership, Blair's legacy would be broadly criticised, and would be principally represented and remembered by the disillusion that spread among liberal thinkers and writers such as Sue Townsend, Hanif Kureishi, Blake Morrison, Richard T. Kelly and David Hare.

Chapter five focuses on critics and theorists of the left who also reacted against Blair's modernisation and his then popular philosophy of the Third Way. Well-known revisionists of the left—such as Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques and Eric Hobsbawm—had long argued for an urgent process of modernisation of the Labour Party if an election was to be won. However, after the 1997 election many of these critics expressed their disillusion with Blair's project. Other voices such as Andrew Marr, Alex Callinicos, Will Hutton, David Marquand, Tony Judt and Roy Hattersley, and those who contributed to the *Marxism Today* issue in 1998, helped to deconstruct the theoretical pillars upon which Blairism had been constituted. They denounced Blair's socialism as mostly based on a very-much settled neoliberalism, the acceptance of the market state, widespread privatisations and a surrender to the forces of globalisation. Later, Iraq would also raise enraged bitterness among media and political analysts: Simon Jenkins, Polly Toynbee, Hugo Young, and John Gray, among others, joined those intellectuals who criticised the Labour government for its undemocratic procedures and its arrogance in Parliament with regards to the war. All together, intellectuals such as Peter Wilby, Suzanne Moore, and Bhikhu Parekh symbolised the eventual disenchantment and pessimism with the government.

Finally, chapter six will analyse other artistic and cultural manifestations that critically responded to Blairism. The artists and cultural figures presented in this latter category—musicians, filmmakers and political cartoonists—constitute a symbolic and representative sample of the art scene of the period and portray the curve of disenchantment that British intelligentsia and the British society experienced with Blairism. This chapter thus opens with the initial enthusiasm that Blair had been able to inspire in the arts through an analysis of the British rock of the 1990s. The "Cool Britannia" phenomenon, intimately linked to the rise of Britpop—with bands such as *Blur* and *Oasis* in the lead—embodied a somewhat generalised optimism among artists, musicians and the music industry as a whole, which was soon to turn into disenchantment. Leading voices in the film industry, namely filmmakers Stephen Frears, Richard Loncraine, Armando Iannucci and Roman Polanski, expressed their disillusion

with a government that, in their view, had used the art scene to win elections and remain in power. Concretely, these filmmakers used their films and TV series to portray, and denounce an ambitious, opportunistic and undemocratic Prime Minister that embodied the motto of "power for power's sake." Similarly, some visual artists also contributed to the widespread opposition to the Iraq war. The political cartoonist Steve Bell, and his visual criticism against the war, will close the chapter, illustrating the widespread contempt that Blair evoked in liberal intellectuals.

1. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS: THEORETICAL DISCOURSES ON INTELLECTUALS AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL STUDIES

This study analyses the critical reactions of British intellectuals and other members of the cultural and artistic spheres to the government of Tony Blair and New Labour's modernisation project from 1997 to 2007. As will be explained, many of these figures initially supported the rising Labour leader, although some of them did so with considerable suspicion. However, once Blair arrived at Downing Street and his first reforms began to be implemented, many of these intellectuals openly criticised and complained about the nature of the recently established Labour government. Consequently, many British writers and thinkers became dissident and counter-hegemonic voices that publicly opposed Blair's government.

Yet, before going into further details about how the British intelligentsia reacted against contemporary politics, it is necessary to establish the methodological criteria that that will structure this analysis, not only in terms of the theoretical discourse that will be used to consider the role of the intellectual during Blair's premiership, but also in terms of the formal aspects that will determine the selection of specific texts and other cultural products to be analysed.

The present dissertation is a historical-cultural analysis within the tradition of Intellectual History and Cultural Studies, and takes an *eclectic* and *holistic* approach to the identification of the intellectual counter-power forces that criticised the government of Tony Blair. With that aim in mind, this chapter will provide a typification of the

British intellectual during the Blair premiership by focusing on 1) the classification of criteria used to select British intellectuals, considering contemporary intelligentsia within the historical legacy of British radical thinkers, and 2) the theoretical discourses—more concretely on intellectual and cultural theory—that have historically been used to define intellectuals and their role in society. This multidimensional approach will, in turn, contribute to the long-standing debates regarding the function and effectiveness of the intellectual in twenty-first century Britain, a debate that has overwhelmingly argued against the relevance of the so-called British intellectuals for their alleged adherence to power and their consequent loss of critical capacities. In this sense, this dissertation represents both an analysis and a *referential* identification of the political activism of contemporary British intellectuals and their most relevant committed texts—understanding texts in this particular context as writings and public statements, as well as any other kind of subversive cultural product.

The term *intellectual* will be used in this study to designate those oppositional writers, critics, thinkers, and cultural figures who together constituted the dissident and nonconformist voices that openly denounced and perceived injustices and incongruences of Blair's premiership between 1997, when Blair won his first general election, and 2007, when he left the office to his successor Gordon Brown. Several essential aspects were taken into consideration when identifying intellectuals and selecting a corpus of their corresponding radical texts. First, the criterion of nationality was used to delimit the vast amount of reputed thinkers who have publicly contributed to the political debate in Blairite Britain. In keeping with this project's goal of emphasising the views and perceptions that national figures have of their own country—more concretely, the critical vision of the British intelligentsia toward their government—the intellectuals in this study are British by birth or passport. Secondly, these figures will generally represent oppositional and radical forces, mostly on the political left, that systematically or unsystematically resisted the government of Blair through recognised—and elitist—media, academic and literary channels, or through other more popular means of communication—i.e. television, the Internet, popular newspapers and other publications. Although most of the intellectuals selected in this study are openly identified with the left, some conservative—or right-of-centre—figures are also considered. These "conservative" exceptions represent those public voices that toe the line between left-wing and right-wing politics, and are frequently slippery and ambiguous figures who sometimes change their political views and indistinctively

oppose and support Conservative and Labour governments alike. The diverse nature of these intellectuals and their texts embodies a wide-ranging spectrum of perspectives that produced varied cultural products—such as high literature, popular literature, essayistic prose, journalism, cultural and political theory, music, cinema, TV series and satirical cartoons—, all of which are considered equally valid for this analysis, which does not attend to exclusive canonical and elitist criteria.

Finally, a chronographic paradigm was also fundamental in the selection of intellectuals for this study. The years of Blair's tenure (1997—2007) contain the principal period of political activism analysed in this study; however, the preliminary era of Blair's modernisation as leader of the Labour Party (from 1994 onwards), as well as the post-Blairite stage when intellectuals continued to express their opinions of Blair's legacy (2007—2014) also provided temporal margins used for the selection of intellectuals and texts. As will be shown, a consideration of intellectual production from a chronological perspective clearly reflects the curve of disenchantment that these intellectuals experienced throughout Blair's premiership.

1.1 THEORIES ON THE INTELLECTUAL: THE CRITICS

Intellectuals have had a relevant role in contemporary revolutionary transformations from the end of the eighteenth century—with the French Revolution as a historical landmark—through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[1] As will be explained in subsequent chapters, the term "intellectual" was coined in France in 1898 as a result of a political crisis, the so-called Dreyfus Affair, which inspired French writers to rise against the government and denounce what they considered the abuse of a political and judicial authority that ignored the rights of the powerless.[2] In this context, the intellectual class, constituted mostly of left-wing thinkers, set itself up as the leading voice of those who could not defend or speak for themselves. From then onwards, a long tradition of intellectual theories, developed particularly throughout the twentieth century, have sought to establish what it means to be an intellectual and what role these

[1] Precisely the twentieth century was considered "the century of intellectuals," the apogee of radical intelligentsia.

[2] The Dreyfus Affair will be extensively explained in section one of chapter three (3.1).

figures have in contemporary societies. A considerable number of theorists and critics have elaborated discourses on the definition and functionality of the intellectual, and these discourses have been used to legitimise analyses of intellectuals in recent history. Among the reputed voices that have been responsible for constructing a network of theoretical discourses on this matter and who have helped develop diverse representations of the intellectual are Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Jean-Paul Sartre, Edward Said, Zygmunt Bauman, Noam Chomsky, Jean-François Lyotard and Julia Kristeva.

I will use the theories of three of these critics—Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault and Edward Said—as fundamental pillars in the ensuing discourse on the intellectual. These authors have been selected due to both what their theories have in common, and what they offer individually. Firstly, I considered it essential to implement the theories of Gramsci and Foucault in a dissertation about intellectuals because the work of these two men represents the founding principles of intellectual theory. These are two indisputable authorities on the issue who have originated their own current of thought in critical theory such that subsequent twentieth-century analyses and elaborations on the function of the intellectual have their origins and influence in their work. With regards to Gramsci, one cannot help but mention that he was "par excellence the philosopher of political praxis" (Hobsbawm, 2000: 12), the theorist of intellectual dissidence who moved beyond his inherited influence from Marx and Lenin to elaborate the discourse on the role of the intellectual as a political activist, that is, the philosopher in action. Foucault, for his part, is the father of postmodern intellectualism, and though some critical voices had previously identified a transformation of the contemporary intellectual (i.e. Jean-Paul Sartre, Herbert Marcuse, and Jean-François Lyotard on the occasion of the events that took place in May 1968),[3] it was Foucault who posited the theory of the intellectual transformation in contemporary societies, thus institutionalising the discourse on the death of the classical intellectual and the

[3] After the events of May 1968, some writers and thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Herbert Marcuse realised that the role of the intellectual had to change. Sartre criticised what he called the classical intellectual for being enclosed in his/her ivory tower and not taking political action to ultimately achieve social transformation. The writer thus advocated for a type of intellectual committed to the masses and to social struggle. However, whereas Sartre's claim seemed to be a demand for a deep transformation of the intellectual, it was, inherently, a reproduction of the Marxist, and most specifically the Gramscian concept of the "organic intellectual." It would be Foucault the theorist who claimed that the old classical (universal) intellectual had ceased to exist and instituted the postmodern discourse on the dissident intellectual—the "specific intellectual" as he called it—who worked as a counter-power element in concrete and specific contexts, and not in pro of a universal truth that was considered utopic and idyllic.

instauration of a new type of contemporary intellectual. In this sense, the author deconstructed the Marxist axiom of utopian absolutes that gave the intellectual a "guru status" (Kritzman, 2013: xiv-xvi). As Lawrence D. Kritzman points out: "If any one figure is responsible for breaking with the totalizing ambition of the universal intellectual it was Michel Foucault" (2013: xiv). Finally, among the different applications and subsequent elaborations of Gramsci and Foucault's theories by a number of critics and intellectuals (Sartre, Lyotard, Chomsky, Bauman, Kristeva, etc.) the work of Edward Said has been selected for this study because his critical vision of the contemporary intellectual, particularly his recovery of the concept of the intelligentsia's revolutionary role throughout the twentieth century, is applicable to an analysis of British intellectuals during Blair's premiership, and supposes new perspectives on the twenty-first century intellectual. While many voices of the late twentieth century vindicated the role of the intellectual in dissident political action, Said was the most prominent author and the one who updated the concept of the oppositional intellectual to reflect the circumstances and reality of the coming twenty-first century:

> It is this quality of speaking out on the side of the oppressed that puts Said in the long tradition of engaged intellectuals, people like Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Angela Davis, Frantz Fanon, Noam Chomsky, C.LR James, James Baldwin, Malcolm X, and Huda Shaarawi—those who seek, as Marx once noted, not just to interpret the world, but to change it. Said's commitments to his people, to his scholarship, and to his own talents have made him arguably the most important intellectual of the latter half of the twentieth century. (Bayoumi and Rubin, 2000: xii)

Furthermore, Said responds to critics who argue that there were no real intellectuals left beyond the 1980s (with the death of Sartre and Foucault) by revitalising the role of the intellectual as an inspirational figure able to incite social change, thus confirming the validity of a type of intellectual that exerts an oppositional and counter-hegemonic function by debilitating the established and normalised power. Broadly speaking, therefore, the three theorists selected for this analysis agree on the social and *oppositional function* of the intellectual, that is, on the counter-power or the counter-hegemonic role that public voices have in society in order to transform it. These theorists argued that intellectuals, themselves a part of the privileged class, have always functioned in structures of power and have opposed and reacted against the political power apparatus of their respective societies. Gramsci, Foucault and Said's discourses

on intellectuals and power, and their analyses of counter-power forces also help describe the committed position of British intellectuals who reacted against Blair's modernising project and his eventual established hegemony.

Antonio Gramsci's theory on intellectuals, as developed in his iconic text the *Prison Notebooks* (1971),[4] constitutes a Marxist analysis of the state of early twentieth-century Western intelligentsia, and represents a vindication of the role of intellectuals as revolutionary forces aiming to counteract the established power, overthrow its hegemony, and defend the rights of the oppressed. This radical perspective on the definition of the intellectual will be essential to analyse British intelligentsia in its confronting position against Blair's project. Gramsci's exploration of the concept of the intellectual springs from his belief that all humans are intellectual beings by nature by virtue of possessing intellectual abilities. However, not all men have the specific *function*—the social and political function—of an intellectual: "All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (Gramsci, 1971: 9). For Gramsci, what made a man an intellectual was political aspiration for leadership and organisation and the motivation to guide the popular masses to achieve their political aims: "What matters is the function, which is directive and organisational" (16). Only through organisation and leadership, which was seen as a collective revolutionary strategy (Jones, 2006: 82), could the intellectual lead the class he represented to achieve power; that is, the intellectual had to be politically engaged to make the world change:

> The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator. (Gramsci, 1971: 10)

The political aspirations of the intellectual class thus determined the configuration of what Gramsci called the "organic intellectual" (6). For Gramsci, the "organic intellectual" was a politically engaged thinker who led and organised the "subaltern social groups" (52) aspiring to contest the hegemonic and established power as a way to

[4] Gramsci's prison letters were first published in 1947 as *Lettere Dal Carcere*. Several later editions were published between 1948 and 1951 with a new rearrangement of the letters. It would be the English translation in 1971 which would make the text available to the English-language readership for the first time (Forgacs, 2000: 24-25).

achieve political and social change. These organic intellectuals were the guiding leaders that inspired the masses to "escape from or improve their condition" (14) and thereby became counter-hegemonic forces that fought to win governmental power and achieve political change: "By challenging the ideas, values, and belief systems of the bourgeoisie's traditional intellectuals, the organic intellectuals of the proletariat would strike a revolutionary blow against the status quo" (Drake, 2009: 193). In this respect, Gramsci's notion of counter-hegemony—a concept that responds to the essence of the theorist's politics even though he never used such a term (Boggs, 1984: xi)—represented not only the organic intellectuals' revolutionary opposition to the established hegemony, but also referred to the aspirations of these intellectuals to develop and create a new hegemony of their class, a counter-hegemony opposed to that of the dominant or bourgeois class (159-166).

However, Gramsci warned that the intellectual, in his/her aspiration to achieve power, had to remain faithful to the organic demands of the popular classes, and had to resist the dominant class with "an organic programme of government which would reflect the essential demands of the popular masses, and in the first place of the peasantry" (Gramsci, 1971: 61). Gramsci claimed that there was a need for "an intelligentsia that is organic to the labour movement," an intelligentsia that exerts political action and participates in the struggle for hegemony (Jones, 2006: 84-85). That is, the organic intellectual had to be politically engaged with his or her class and with his or her cause, remaining faithful to the interests of the class he/she represented, to "counterpose a resistance and a counter-offensive 'organised' according to a plan" (Gramsci, 1971: 61). As Richard Drake put it: "The proletariat needed its own intellectuals who would 'adhere to its program and its doctrine'" (2009: 193).

How does Gramsci's theory on the organic intellectual apply to the present study of intellectuals under Blair's premiership? First of all, it is necessary to consider that Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* were written in the Italy of the 1930s, which means that his Marxist interpretation of society and of the role of the revolutionary intelligentsia needs to be understood in its historical context. Consequently, the author's theory on intellectuals will be applied to this study bearing in mind the substantial differences extant in twenty-first century British society, but emphasising, at the same time, that the Gramscian revolutionary aspiration of the intellectual to change and improve society is

relevant today since still exists a need to hear public voices that try to confront and deconstruct the established power.

Gramsci's understanding of the "organic intellectual" was structured upon three basic principles: a) intellectuals had to be politically committed to the proletarian cause, that is, they had a political responsibility and a political function in their societies; b) these intellectuals were oppositional leaders with aspirations to achieve governmental power whose aim was to overthrow the existing and established hegemony to found one of their own; c) the "organic intellectual" had to remain faithful to the organic interests and the organic demands of the class he or she represented. There are some aspects of Gramsci's definition that are not applicable to contemporary reality. On the one hand, the present-day intellectual is evidently detached from the proletarian revolution that Gramsci described;[5] that is, his/her hegemonic aspirations to achieve governmental power are not valid in contemporary societies, for many current intellectuals have gradually abandoned party loyalties that might have instilled in them the ultimate ambition to win political power. As will be shown, most British intellectuals who responded to the politics of Tony Blair primarily functioned as independent thinkers, and even though some shared political affinities with a specific political party, their political activism was far from participating in collective party mechanisms and from the orthodox revolutionary aspirations that could have motivated them to create a hegemony of their own class. However, as far as political commitment is concerned, many of the intellectuals here selected do respond to the political function that Gramsci regarded as essential to be considered an organic intellectual, namely political engagement and political action. Furthermore, Gramsci's intellectuals also had to be part of the revolutionary forces opposed to the established power, and as such the organic intellectual had a dissident, nonconformist and oppositional function and aimed to challenge the status quo and change contemporary society:

> By placing importance on the power of intellectuals and of ideas, he wished to demonstrate that social change depends on deconstructing and demystifying interpersonal relations, social roles, all institutional practices, which have been naturalised and considered inevitable. (Landy, 2002: 173)

[5] With the growth of the middle class and the decrease of the working class after the social changes of the postwar West, the idea of liberation of the proletarian masses has changed significantly. Also, with the spread of education at all levels of society, the representative and guiding role of intellectuals has gradually changed in forms and styles.

In this dissertation, the intellectuals that actively criticised Blair's reforms performed the function of dissident and oppositional intellectuals: they were the counter-hegemonic voices that attacked the established power and the indisputable hegemony of Blair's New Labour.

Gramsci's concept of "counter-hegemony" was understood in two ways: a) intellectuals had to be oppositional and dissident leaders who fought to overthrow the dominant class, and b) they aspired to create a dominant class of their own. In the present study, I will use the concept "counter-hegemony" to identify the oppositional and radical intellectuals who criticised and attacked Blair's power: these were the counter-hegemonic intellectuals who contested Blair's hegemony; however, they did not aspire to develop a proletarian hegemony of their own. The intellectual at the turn of the twenty-first century seems to have abandoned the revolutionary aspiration to achieve governmental power, but still demonstrates a counter-power force that fights to challenge the status quo and to generally improve the condition of the less favoured echelons of society.

Finally, Gramsci's notion of the organic intellectual warned that these revolutionary leaders had to remain faithful to the organic demands and interests of those whom they represented. For Gramsci, the intellectuals' endeavour to achieve governmental power had to be determined by their loyalty to the class they belonged to so as to implement "an organic programme of government that would reflect the essential demands of the popular masses" (Gramsci, 1971: 61). In this respect, some of the intellectuals included in this dissertation—such as Harold Pinter, Sue Townsend, Eric Hobsbawm, Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques, etc.—generally remain faithful to the organic interests of the class they claim to represent, whereas others are contradictory and inconsistent. As will be explained in subsequent chapters, the evolution of the present-day intellectual distinguishes him/her from Gramsci's intellectual—systematically opposed and organically linked to the class he/she belongs—and demands that we understand him/her with his or her own complexities, ambiguities and contradictions.[6]

[6] As the present study is more a holistic analysis of the intellectual responses to Blair's politics, it will be difficult to extensively explore all individual cases with precision. This will remain, therefore, a subject for future research.

The second theorist that will structure the present analysis of intellectuals and Blairism will be Michel Foucault and his theory of *Power/Knowledge*. In order to understand his contemporary conception of the intellectual, it is necessary to previously analyse Foucault's notions of "truth" and "power" and the relationship that intellectuals had to both concepts, as well as Foucault's understanding of the intellectuals' role in contemporary societies. Unlike Gramsci, who conceived of the intellectual as engaged in a binary battle for the universal truth between the dominant and the subaltern classes, Foucault understands "truth" not in its singular universality, but in its complex multiplicity. Whereas the old concept of truth was centralised, universal and singular, Foucault's new approach to truth was diffused, decentralised, plural and relative: there is not a singular universal truth but multiple complex truths that correspond to the diversity and complexity of contemporary life, and that are created and used to satisfy political and economic interests (Allen, 1998: 168). Similarly, whereas "power" had been previously understood as the centralised and authoritative exertion of domination by a small group of people—namely a government—for Foucault, power cannot be reduced to the confines of the state, but rather is diffused and decentralised throughout society (Newman, Saul 2001: 78). Power is no longer a binary system in which a ruling class or a government punishes the people, but a relational attitude existent at all societal levels—even personal relationships—determining our self and our identity:

> What I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the state. In two senses: first of all because the state, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the state can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations. The state is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology, and so forth. (Foucault, 1980: 122)

For Foucault, power in contemporary societies is exerted in a more complex and unconscious way in which certain values and beliefs are institutionalised as normal or abnormal, and the latter are ultimately excluded from society through an invisible hierarchy. The relationship between "power" and "knowledge" is evident when Foucault suggests that power depends on knowledge, and knowledge depends on power in order to exist (51-52). This is the complex reciprocal relationship of what Foucault defined with the single term of *Power/Knowledge*. According to the author, this "regime

of truth" (131) is generated by institutions, education, the media and political and economic interests; thus, "he moves us away from seeing knowledge as objective and dispassionate towards a view which sees knowledge always working in the interests of particular groups" (Mills, 2003: 79). In other words, power institutionalises certain truths—scientific truths, values and beliefs—that are of the interest of certain groups. Those who want to achieve power do not fight to obtain the universal truth, but to achieve the control of those means of distribution of truth. For the theorist, invisible hegemony dominates contemporary life.

What is the role of the intellectual in this interpretation of contemporary reality? Foucault argues that the modern intellectual is the "specific" professional that is an expert on the concrete and who, unlike the old "universal" intellectual, does not seek to obtain the universal truth. These specific intellectuals now deal with problems of everyday life, and from their concrete and particular circumstances they are able to be politically engaged and contest power, not ahead of the masses, but alongside them: "Rather than standing above or outside their society, 'specific intellectuals' are immersed within it" (May, 1993: 6-7). In this sense,

> instead of telling others about their oppression, instead of drawing from it its truth and its place in their lives, the task of intellectuals is to stand in solidarity with those whose situation forces them to struggle. This task confers upon the intellectual no privileged status. (7)

For Foucault, the specific professionals (teachers, technicians, magistrates) exert political struggle in their everyday lives, and when the technician or the professional becomes politicised, he/she embodies the *function* of the new intellectual. For Foucault, the intellectual is no longer the writer that stands above the oppressed, but the politicised professional that is immersed in everyday culture:

> Since the time when each individual's specific activity begun to serve as the basis for politicization, the threshold of writing, as the sacralising mark off the intellectual, has disappeared […] Magistrates and psychiatrists, doctors and social workers, laboratory technicians and sociologists have become able to participate, both within their own fields and through mutual exchange and support, in a global process of politicisation of intellectuals. (Foucault, 1980: 127)

Consequently, while the old "universal" intellectual was the leader and the guiding light that opposed power in the name of truth and justice, the new intellectual is the savant or expert who "begins to intervene in contemporary political struggles in the name of a 'local' scientific truth" (129). In Foucault's view, the old intellectual, understood as the "great writer" who seeks the universal truth above or outside society, is disappearing, but Foucault advocates for a new type of intellectual who belongs to contemporary common life, and, in its multiplicity, remains politically engaged:

> The figure in which the functions and prestige of this new intellectual are concentrated is no longer that of the "writer of genius," but that of "absolute savant," no longer he who bears the values of all, opposes the unjust sovereign or his ministers and makes his cry resound even beyond the grave. It is rather he who, along with a handful of others, has at his disposal, whether in the service of the State or against it, powers which can either benefit or irrevocably destroy life. […] Meanwhile we are at present experiencing the disappearance of the figure of the "great writer." (129)

Is the intellectual therefore a counter-power force in Foucauldian theory? For Foucault, intellectuals are, first of all, politically engaged, and secondarily, they contest power independently from any regime of thought or ideology that can be transformed into power (Kritzman, 1994: 29). In Foucault's view, the revolution of the intellectual is not the simple insurrection against oppression, nor a "complete challenge against bourgeois power" (Mills, 2003: 37); instead, oppression is exerted in multilateral directions that must be contested through "anti-authority struggles" in every local and concrete instance in which people suffer the influence of power (38). Revolution is, for Foucault, a form of resistance that is "nebulous and dispersed" (Newman, Saul 2001: 79). In this sense, the proper role of the intellectual is to reveal when and where power relations occur, to expose the mechanisms of power when they take place in order to provide the people with the opportunity to abandon the spheres of domination by working not ahead of people, but alongside them (May, 1993: 7). In Foucault's view, intellectuals are no longer the leaders, the representative voices who speak for the oppressed, for

> in the most recent upheaval, the intellectual discovered that the masses no longer need him to gain knowledge: they *know* perfectly well, without illusion; they know far better than he and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves. (Foucault and Deleuze, 1977: 207)

Instead, the intellectual now has to provide the resources to abandon states of subjugation. The role of the intellectual is not to show the truth to people, because people already know the truth. If the intellectual puts himself ahead of the people to lead or supervise them, he/she becomes an instrument in the system of power, thus reproducing the relations of power that determine the structure he/she is precisely criticising:

> The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself "somewhat ahead and to the side" in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of "knowledge," "truth," "consciousness," and discourse." (207-208)

This is a struggle against the mechanisms of power, a struggle to make these mechanisms visible so as to ultimately change them: "This is a struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious power" (208). The role of the intellectual in this struggle is not to illuminate, to guide or to represent, but to "arise from the complaints and demands of those concerned," and to exert the political function of debilitating and diminishing power (208-209). Just by naming injustices and making them visible, the intellectual deconstructs the regime of power and helps fight it:

> And if pointing out these sources—denouncing and speaking out—is to be a part of the struggle, it is not because they were previously unknown. Rather, it is because to speak on this subject, to force the institutionalised networks of information to listen, to produce names, to point the finger of accusation, to find targets, is the first step in the reversal of power and the initiation of new struggles against existing forms of power. (214)

Despite Foucault's perception of the intellectual in terms of struggle against power, it is difficult, and controversial, to locate the theorist as a left-wing activist. Some experts have pointed out that Foucault's view of the intellectual is not a revolutionary one, and that the theorist is more a "dispassionate observer" of reality and political struggle than a vindicator and a "concerned critic" (Rorty, 1991: 173). Although Foucault began his career as a communist, he later opposed some dogmas of the party, and his political engagement, as interpreted from his writings, was ambiguous and complex, for his position was always to be dissenting and sceptical with any regime

of thought, and independent from any ideological influence (Mills, 2003: 22). However, other scholars have argued that Foucault's position was precisely that of an activist, for his claim of the need to reveal and expose relations of power was a political strategy to vindicate social change. Foucault acknowledges "that power is oppressive, that it imposes limits on the individual, that it imprisons him within a fixed subjectivity" all of which is reason enough to resist and react (Newman, Saul 2001: 87). Foucault himself asserted that the role of theory was practice, and action. Theory—and the intellectual—are not there just to observe or be observed, they exist to be used in action, the "revolutionary action that questions […] the totality of power and the hierarchy that maintains it" (Foucault and Deleuze, 1977: 209). For the author, the role of the intellectual is to expose the instruments and effects of power, and by making them visible, he/she contributes to a debilitation of domination:

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it. […] We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart. (Foucault, 1978: 100-101)

Is Foucault's concept of the intellectual a revolutionary one? At the very least, the critic exposes the insurrection of the oppressed, which is understood not only as the insurrection of individuals themselves, but also of their repressed power, and their repressed "knowledges." For Foucault, power is "an organ of repression" (1980: 90) that subjugates unacknowledged powers, suppresses unknown truths and persecutes unrecognised knowledges. This is what Foucault called the "subjugated" knowledge, the untold stories that "have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (82). This is the popular knowledge that has been disguised, and "confined to the margins of knowledge" where another knowledge, the "erudite knowledge" is produced, distributed and regulated (83). In this sense, the theorist

> shows in his work how truth is something which is supported materially by a whole range of practices and institutions: universities, government departments,

> publishing houses, scientific bodies and so on. All of these institutions work to exclude statements which they characterise as false and they keep in circulation those statements which they characterise as true. (Mills, 2003: 58)

Foucault claims that the role of the intellectual is to question the mechanisms that establish a particular truth as scientific and widely accepted, in order to deconstruct those mechanisms of power that reproduce a hierarchy between the reputed knowledge and the unknown stories. The role of the intellectual is to fight against these mechanisms by studying and exposing

> the rules of formation of statements which are accepted as scientifically true. […] It is a question of what governs statements, and the way in which they govern each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable, and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures. (Foucault, 1980: 112)

The intellectual instigates insurrection by those who are oppressed, and fights alongside those concerned with the state of subordination in a power structure. For Foucault, the new type of intellectual, that specific professional that was previously marginalised in favour of a traditional and elitist intellectual, now becomes politicised and responsible for his/her own insurrection. Popular knowledge, which had also been excluded, now finds its function and power as an intellectual force, for it can now speak for itself, and does not require the representation of the old intellectual.

All in all, Foucault's theory on intellectuals can be structured into several principles. For the author, the framework that identifies the new type of intellectual is determined, first of all, by political activism. In his view, intellectuals are the new "specific professionals" that become politicised in their daily struggles, and become engaged with a political cause from their ordinary and most immediate realities in order to improve their social condition. Secondly, the intellectual is also understood as an oppositional force that responds to power while remaining independent from the established regimes of thought, claims for insurrection of oppressed powers, and struggles against power and the hierarchy that maintains it (Foucault and Deleuze, 1977: 209). Thirdly, the theorist maintains that power is not only exerted through the state, but is dispersed throughout society, in every social and relational interaction, which means that insurrection cannot only be directed against the state, but against every single instance of oppression. Lastly, by responding to power, by naming and

pointing at injustices and instances of subordination and oppression, the intellectual causes the structure of power to disappear, or, at the very least, initiates "the first step in the reversal of power" by debilitating and undermining it (214).

Foucault's theory of intellectuals and power will be reflected in this dissertation when presenting the British intellectuals' reactions against the Blairite power as "counter-power" forces, as politically opposed to instances of oppression and subordination. The intellectuals selected in this study respond to Foucault's claims that the new type of intellectual needs to be a political activist calling for insurrection, against the dominant power and the hierarchy that maintains it (209). These will be the intellectuals who responded to Blair's power by exposing it and making it visible so as to debilitate it and diminish its influence. These intellectuals did not aim to overthrow Blair's authority in revolution, as Gramsci would have claimed, nor did they attempt to achieve governmental authority; instead, they attempted to weaken the established supremacy by revealing and exposing the instances in which Blair's control was exerted. These intellectuals—writers, thinkers, critics, musicians, filmmakers, journalists, and artists—within their concrete professions and respective realities, contributed to the analysis and deconstruction of the political project and discourse of Blair's New Labour. With their writings, public statements, films, songs, and other cultural products, these intellectuals aimed at revealing what they considered to be Blair's abuses of power. They unveiled and described those political realities that had been disguised and suppressed during Blair's term in office—the acceptance of neoliberalism, the deterioration of the welfare state, the consequences of the Iraq war. By doing so, these intellectuals weakened the power of Blair's premiership and laid the initial groundwork for a reversal of his policies.

However, as can be seen from the selection of these intellectuals, some of them will still be commonly identified with the prototype of the "great writer" who uses his/her writings to contest power. Many of the individuals included in this study are novelists, playwrights, and theorists who publicly denounced through their writings or other public statements the instances in which Blair's power was exerted. It is thus necessary to clarify that the prototype of the classical or "great" writer as defined by Foucault, does not adequately describe the contemporary novelists or theorists who are multifaceted, detached from an elitist intellectualism, and who interact with popular culture and popular means of communication. I defend the need to include these new kinds of intellectual voices, the intellectuals who perform a more down-to-earth role as

writers and theorists and who have been integrated into the ordinary life of the common, middle-class and consumerist citizen. They also perform subversive and counter-power actions, and even though they are mainly focused on dissident and insurrectionary writing, they also contribute to daily "anti-authority struggles" of the ordinary citizen by participating in street demonstrations and celebrity TV shows and by actively opposing political campaigns. Indeed, the figure of the "great writer" seems to be disappearing with the demise of many twentieth-century thinkers, yet, there is a new type of ordinary intellectual—be it a writer or a technician—who, working from different professions, realities and backgrounds, remains politically engaged as a counter-power force and contributes in multiple ways to the insurrection of the oppressed against the dominant power.

Additionally, apart from these new writers and theorists, another type of intellectual is represented in this dissertation. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, some figures of the media and the art scene are here analysed because of their nonconformist and anti-Blairite struggles. They will be journalists and popular artists—filmmakers, musicians, and political cartoonists—who contributed to the criticism of Blair's government by exposing and revealing injustices or inconsistencies in the Prime Minister's politics. The inclusion of these critical voices can be controversial if considered from a traditional standard of what it means to be an intellectual; however, I defend the need to broaden the concept of the new contemporary intellectual that has gradually approached what Foucault called "the subjugated knowledge" (Foucault, 1980: 82). As previously explained, in order to deconstruct relationships of power that give prestige and status to some while taking it from others that are excluded from the margins of knowledge, it is necessary to question the mechanisms that establish the accepted and reputed knowledge—in this case, that of the accepted and reputed intellectuals—and which exclude and disqualify some voices from recognition—those of the unacknowledged intellectuals. The elitism of the intellectual has been an axiom that distinguished him/her from the non-intellectual and distinguished the reputed voices from those who were disqualified, "located low down on the hierarchy" and deprived from recognition or scientificity (82). The identification of some of the critical voices present in this study with the radical intelligentsia can thus be controversial and may be contested. Are journalists and pop artists a modern type of intellectual? The traditional standardisation of the intellectual disqualifies and excludes these types of

voices that belong to common culture and popular means of communication, rather than to erudite and elitist spheres of knowledge. This dissertation questions the mechanisms by which certain types of intellectuals are accepted and others are excluded, while also recognising certain types of voices that, in their political dissidence and activism, also perform the role of the intellectual as counter-power forces. The selection of intellectuals in this study responds to eclectic, all-inclusive criteria that will identify new modes of intelligentsia as perfectly valid forces of insurrection. Following Foucault's idea that a new type of intellectual has been born—for knowledge has abandoned elitist intellectual circles and now belongs to the previously excluded masses—it is necessary to recognise not only intellectual figures identified as such in a more traditional sense, but also textual resources that do not exclusively belong to canonical high culture spheres. This dissertation thus examines how contemporary culture has abandoned the ivory tower and integrated popular culture, and how the past "erudite knowledge" has given room to other professionals that had previously been excluded from the prestigious and elitist class of the intelligentsia.

After Gramsci and Foucault, Edward Said has also contributed to the debate and discourse on intellectuals with his collection of lectures entitled *Representations of the Intellectual* (the 1993 Reith Lectures) (1994). Being a committed intellectual himself, especially with regard to the Palestinian question, he has been particularly interested in the public role of the intellectual and has proffered a contemporary interpretation to the question of identifying the intellectual and his/her role in society. Like other authors before him, Said agreed that the intellectual had to be a politically engaged figure, a counter-power force that would lead the anti-authority struggle and help change social reality. With certain Gramscian influence, Said confirmed the representative and revolutionary function of intellectuals who were supposed to challenge the establishment and create a new moral conscience. The intellectual always had to be, for Said, publicly committed to the cause of the poor, the minority, the unrepresented and the powerless; moreover, he/she had to aspire to improve society, without utopian ambitions, and remain eager to challenge power, denounce injustices and reveal oppression whenever it was ignored or silenced:

> The intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. And this role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions,

> to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. (Said, 1996: 11)

Said maintained the relevance of the public and political *function* of the intellectual and recognised the need of the intellectual to inspire and convince others to follow the cause of freedom and justice through public engagement, whether that meant "talking, writing, teaching, [or] appearing on television" (12-13). The function of the intellectual as a public figure is understood as political action. Intellectuals must be engaged with their times; "politics is everywhere," Said maintains, and intellectuals are there to confront the established narratives, to oppose and challenge "justifications of power" and to be critical of "easy formulas or ready-made clichés" (21-23). According to Said, the intellectual is "the highest form of public man, ready to enunciate truths and perspectives which, when circumstances demand, disturb convention and intimidate power" (Rojek, 2003: 1). He or she is a nonconformist, a challenger and "disturber of the status quo" (Said, 1996: x), the creator of conscience and a defender of the universal values of freedom and justice. The function of the intellectual is, ultimately, to speak the truth to power and "to induce a change in the moral climate" (100), by "taking a stand against one's own government," or "against one's own people" in order to "achieve peace, reconciliation and justice" (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001: 39). In order to exert this subversive function, the intellectual also needs to speak the truth as an outsider and as a "peripheral" voice; that is, the intellectual needs to remain critically detached in order to contest power:

> In underlining the intellectual's role as outsider I have had in mind how powerless one often feels in the face of an overwhelmingly powerful network of social authorities—the media, the government and corporations, etc.—who crowd out the possibilities for achieving any change. To deliberately not belong to these authorities is in many ways not to be able to effect direct change and, alas, even at times to be relegated to the role of a witness who testifies to a horror otherwise unrecorded. (Said, 1996: xvi-xvii)

Said thus considered the intellectual's independence fundamental. Whereas other writers such as Gramsci defended the need to carry out the revolution within the dogmas of a political party, Said emphasised the need of the intellectual to remain distant and detached from power and from any circle of influence. But is that possible?

Is it possible for the intellectual to be systematically oppositional while remaining completely detached from all relations of power? As Foucault had previously argued, human beings are exposed to multiple power interactions, and Said himself also acknowledged that in contemporary society it is very difficult to remain a completely independent and

> autonomously functioning intellectual, one who is not beholden to, and therefore constrained by, his or her affiliations with universities that pay salaries, political parties that demand loyalty to a party line, think tanks that while they offer freedom to do research perhaps more subtly compromise judgement and restrain the critical voice. (67-68)

For Said, today's intellectuals are potentially vulnerable to many political and economic interests, and it is in this context in which the intellectual must, to the best of his/her ability, remain independent and detached from power and its influence. This is what Said would call the "relative independence" of the intellectual, the relative autonomy of the intellectual who, despite such pressures, remains "as exile and marginal, as amateur, and as the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power" (xvi). Said's relativity entails an understanding of humankind in its social condition and dictates that the intellectual, as human being who lives in society, cannot easily be isolated from any circle of influence or deny possible pressures (Scalmer, 2007: 41). Nevertheless, it is precisely when the intellectual is immersed in society, and not isolated from it, that he/she must respond to power and react against it as an outsider. It is the attitude and the *functioning* as an oppositional force that makes him or her an independent intellectual: "It is a spirit in opposition, rather than in accommodation, that grips me because the romance, the interest, the challenge of intellectual life is to be found in dissent against the status quo" (Said, 1996: xvii).

Thus it is the function and the attitude of dissidence and subversion that characterises the intellectual, not his/her profession or complete isolation. Intellectuals are professionals of any kind that cannot be completely isolated from society or from any influence of power; however, according to the author, the intellectual has to retain his/her critical voice against instances of oppression and injustice, and it is precisely when the professional exerts a subversive function that he or she can be considered an intellectual. This is how Said distinguished between the professionalism and the amateurism of the intellectual. The professional who works exclusively as a

professional, who is "locked into narrow professional specialisations which produce their own arcane vocabulary and speak only to other specialists," is not a true intellectual (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001: 35):

> By professionalism I mean thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with an eye on the clock, and another cocked at what is considered to be proper, professional behaviour—not rocking the boat, not straying outside the accepted paradigms or limits, making yourself marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical and "objective." (Said, 1996: 74)

The true intellectual is the "amateur" who may not be an expert or a specialist in a particular field but is nonetheless politically engaged with a cause and raises moral questions about certain issues (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001: 36). The true intellectual is the professional who works as an amateur, he or she who carries out the function of the engaged intellectual with

> the desire to be moved not by profit or reward but by love for and unquenchable interest in the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to a specialty, in caring for ideas and values despite the restrictions of a profession. (Said, 1996: 76)

The amateur is thus the intellectual who, moved by passion and personal conviction, "questioned professional routines, raised moral issues and pursued original and personal questions" (Scalmer, 2007: 41).

All in all, Said reinforces principles that define what it means to be an intellectual and what role intellectuals have in society. Broadly speaking, Said emphasises that the intellectual is, first of all, a public figure politically engaged with the reality in which he or she lives and is committed to improving the present social condition. Secondly, the intellectual is the one who exerts the function of the public speaker and opposes power, confronts authority, and presents embarrassing questions that are normally ignored or silenced. Thirdly, the intellectual needs to remain distant and detached from power and exert his/her role as an outsider with relative independence and personal conviction. As has been previously explained with Gramsci and Foucault, Said's interpretation, and representation of the intellectual will be instrumental in the following study to justify the selection of a corpus of subversive intellectuals who reacted against Blair's reforms.

These intellectuals will all be, in keeping with Said's theory, politically engaged figures whose function was that of the public intellectual who opposed power and authority in the name of truth and justice and who denounced the injustices that were normally "swept under the rug" (Said, 1996: 11). Also, and most importantly, many of the intellectuals included herein similarly exerted roles as outsiders and independent critics who, as peripheral counter-power forces, attacked the government of Tony Blair.

However, it is necessary to clarify several aspects of the application of Saidian theory in this dissertation. First of all, the interpretation of intellectuals as "outsiders" needs to be explained. For many critics, Said's theory on the intellectual as an outsider presents contradictions and ambiguities: how can the intellectual stand outside and inside society simultaneously? How can a marginal and peripheral perspective be compatible with belonging to and living in society? Is Said's vision of the contemporary intelligentsia an idealistic or a realistic one? Although some critics questioned the apparent ambiguity and the contradiction of Said's theory (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001: 48), the author's intention was to emphasise the relative independence of the intellectual. As he acknowledged, intellectuals, as human beings, belong to a society that exerts relations of power in multiple directions, preventing a complete isolation and rendering the intellectual vulnerable to different political or economic interests. That is why Said advocated for the relative independence of the intellectual, for he or she is expected to be an exile, a marginal and peripheral figure within certain realistic terms. For some critics, Said offered a representation of the intellectual with "a realistic and subtle assessment of the institutional circumstances under which intellectuals laboured" (Scalmer, 2007: 38). In that sense, the author admitted that intellectuals, in their different professions, face challenges that diminish their critical detachment, and it is in these situations that the intellectual, exerting his/her committed political function, "can choose between actively representing the truth to the best of your ability and passively allowing a patron or an authority to direct you" (Said, 1996: 121). Intellectuals who work for universities or for certain newspapers will evidently be vulnerable to different pressures, but "it is a spirit in opposition, rather than in accommodation" which defines the intellectual as such (xvii). Unlike the intellectual as defined by Said, those experts and professionals who, in their condition of intellectuals, are hired by a government, an industry or a political party, "compromise judgement and restrain the critical voice" (68).

In the following chapters, many intellectuals will be presented as the critical voices that reacted against the politics of Tony Blair. Broadly speaking, they will be considered relatively independent individuals who, from their various professions and backgrounds, challenged Blair's decisions and his controversial transformation of the Labour Party. Many of them actually performed the role of publicly committed figures and "amateurs" for it was their personal conviction that motivated them to react and denounce what they considered unfair and intolerable. However, are these selected intellectuals completely independent from any kind of influence or external interest? Said accepts that the individual remain in a state of relative independence because he considers that intellectuals are also human beings who are exposed to different pressures, both social and historical. They are part of the society in which they are born and are thus a product of their own time; consequently, they cannot remain completely isolated (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001: 32-33). In this sense, the contemporary intellectual has been criticised for having succumbed not only to the desires and pressures of the common ordinary citizen, but also to the mechanisms and means of popular culture. During the last decade of the twentieth century, many intellectuals, such as those included in this study, gradually began to be immersed in the ordinary culture that was so typical of their own time. This made them the object of criticism by those who still demanded that the intellectual be independent from the commodities of ordinary life and provided an erudite interpretation of the world from an isolated position. In this sense, some of the intellectuals included here would probably not be approved by those voices that defend the erudition of the intellectual. Ironically, Said himself was known for being a defender of high culture, concretely classical music, which he considered to be a "form of intellectual labour" while ignoring or disregarding popular cultural forms (Hart, 2000: 36). Said's own "tenacious fidelity to a cultural hierarchy privileging literature and music, a hierarchy that perhaps devalues the iconophilia of media, the Internet and popular cultures" (Curthoys and Ganguly, 2007: 2) would thus tender some of the intellectuals that have been selected in this study—namely those who belong more to the world of popular culture—inappropriate. However, it is necessary to use Said's own theory to deconstruct his own contradictions and his argument of high culturalism so as to defend the need to be more inclusive with new forms of subversive intelligentsia.

Said affirmed that intellectuals live in society and are a product of their own time. By using Said's concept of "relative independence," we may counteract the author's disregard for new forms of popular intelligentsia, and better understand the contemporary intellectual—such as those intellectuals who publicly criticised Blair's premiership—as a member of his/her own time. Said stated that "one task of the intellectual is the effort to break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication" (Said, 1996: xi). Although the author was not advocating being more inclusive with regard to forms of popular culture, I intend to use Said's own concept of the intellectual to deconstruct any conservative views on the new representation of the intellectual and include other forms of intelligentsia by "breaking down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought" (xi). As some critics have pointed out, Said's representation of the intellectual as being exclusively a writer or an academic does not consider any other forms of intelligentsia beyond that.[7] Here I join those voices that claim there is a need to broaden the scope of intellectual recognition within different spheres of intellectual resistance, whether these be "educational bodies" such as universities, "elite cultural institutions," journalism, or any other kind of popular culture product—television, film, radio, art (Scalmer, 2007: 49). In this respect, "a contemporary sociology of intellectuals needs to encompass diversity. Restricting the model of 'the intellectual' to the narrow headlands of the university and the writer simply leaves the broader continent of 'representation' uncharted" (49).

In summation, the theories of these three twentieth-century thinkers will be employed to define the subversive role of contemporary intelligentsia, and the criteria derived from their respective theories that were used to select the critical voices analysed in this dissertation. Although there are great differences between Gramsci, Foucault and Said, these theorists seem to agree on certain basic precepts: a) that the intellectual needs to be politically engaged with the reality of his/her time, b) that the intellectual needs to exert a subversive, counter-hegemonic, counter-power and oppositional *function* by reacting against the established power—whether that is a

[7] Edward Said, while trying to update his Reith Lectures (1993) on the representations of the intellectual, wrote his essay "The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals" (2002) which intended to be more inclusive of other forms of intelligentsia beyond the figure of the writer and the academic. He claimed that there was a need to integrate other activities—namely film, photography and even music— as legitimate forms of intellectual action (Said, 2002: 36). However, there was no explicit reference to the validity and acceptance of popular culture forms, such as popular films and popular music.

government or any kind of relation of power—and c) that the intellectual has to be engaged with the anti-authority struggles of the oppressed, the minorities and the powerless. These were the criteria used to identify the openly dissident individuals who criticised Blairism: they were the counter-hegemonic voices that publicly denounced the injustices and incoherence of a new political project that was meant to represent the left-wing voter, but which, after a long process of political modernisation ended up being, for many of these critical voices, a party and a government complicit with neoliberalism, the world of international finance and the established middle class. Much of the intellectuals' criticism was focused on Blair's reforms, reforms that continued to dismantle the welfare state (with cuts in public benefits and public spending), accepted capitalism and neoliberalism as the only alternative to social changes (with a new defence of privatisations and wealth creation instead of redistribution), and yielded other controversial decisions that put into question the democratic paradigms of the British government—namely the decision to join the United States in the Iraq war. Many different kinds of intellectuals—writers, theorists, artists, and public voices in general—exerted the public and political function of denouncing and criticising what they considered to be the abuses and deceptions of Blair's power, and even though this new intelligentsia did not seek to substitute Blair's government with one of their own, they all contributed, with their different discourses, to debilitate and diminish Blair's credibility. However, although broadly speaking these critical voices exerted the counter-power role of the intellectual, it is not possible to analyse individually whether all of these intellectuals performed the function of the perfect independent intellectual at all times. Due to the extensive number of intellectuals here included, some will be analysed in detail in terms of their oppositional functionality, and others will be left for future research.

Finally, this dissertation also aims to contribute to the debate that questions the existence of the twenty-first century intellectual. Whereas there are some respected voices claim that the intellectual, understood as the "great writer," is disappearing in the contemporary world because the new public voices are now closer to more democratic spheres of knowledge and popular culture, I here intend to show, through this collection of critical manifestations, that intellectuals in Britain do exist and that they have been actively committed to opposing power, concretely Blair's government. By examining examples of British intellectuals who reacted against Blair's politics, this dissertation

will demonstrate that intellectuals still exist and perform a public function in societies, even if the type and shape of the modern intellectual seems to be changing and thus renders him/her critically invisible or disqualified from recognition.

1.2 THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL STUDIES: THE TEXTS

After explaining the theories that will be used to analyse the position of the intellectuals as critics, it is now necessary to focus on the theoretical rationale used to justify the nature of the texts—the intellectuals' writings and cultural products—that appear in the present study. This section will thus be a complementary theoretical axis that explains the use of several concepts and procedures derived from Cultural Studies in order to accomplish this analysis of intellectuals and Blairism. These will be, on the one hand, the *cross-disciplinary* nature of the texts, and on the other, the interpretation of every cultural product here included as ultimately a *political construct*. The texts that will be selected belong to many different disciplines of both *high* and *popular* culture such as literature, theory, journalism, popular music, film and political cartoons, and they will all be analysed and interpreted as valid political constructs used to criticise and debilitate Blair's power.

Beginning in the 1950s, a group of cultural critics—Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall—has vindicated the need to understand mankind and the world as the result of a fluctuation of many different factors from a wide range of disciplines, such as History, Sociology, Politics, Anthropology, Ethnography, Literature, Art, Media Studies, and Film Studies, that have traditionally been studied in isolation. These thinkers and critics claimed that reality could not be interpreted in scientific isolation and affirmed that a more panoramic viewpoint was necessary to understand the influences and interconnections that existed between a society, its political vindications and the cultural products of a concrete historical juncture. Those critics called for a new approach, a comprehensive and integrative analysis of reality and contemporary culture. Their work resulted in the creation of *Cultural Studies*, a field they tried to institutionalise as a legitimate discipline. The importance of their interdisciplinary approach has been defended by many authoritative voices, Raymond Williams in particular, who advocated the need to interpret culture not only as a compound of an interconnected network of factors but as a "whole way of life"

(1963: 12). Likewise, American critic Fredric Jameson maintained the urgency of a "transdisciplinary study" of culture, understanding culture, as his editors state in the Introduction to *The Jameson Reader*, as a "social whole" (Hardt and Weeks, 2001: 2). Susan Basnett, in her study *Studying British Cultures* (1997), also pointed out that "the subject called Cultural Studies proved likewise not easy to categorise; it defied labels and resisted answers, preferring instead to ask questions. From its earliest manifestations, it crossed disciplinary boundaries and questioned assumptions about the validity of disciplines" (2003: xv).

Studies of postmodernism have likewise contributed to an understanding of reality as a complex compound of social constructs that overlap and diffuse traditional boundaries. Jameson's concept of cultural "pastiche" proffers the idea of eclecticism as the natural base of modern societies wherein juxtaposition, sometimes contradictory and sometimes schizophrenic, defines (postmodern) Cultural Studies. In his essay entitled "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (1983), Jameson speaks of "the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture" (1984: 112) in contemporary society, and he bestows upon cultural products such as Andy Warhol's pop art or music by the Clash the same value as high canonical literature (111). The resultant blurring of boundaries and conjunction of different cultural statuses is consistent with Jameson's definition of postmodernism, which entails "specific reactions against the established forms of high modernism, against this or that dominant high modernism which conquered the university, the museum, the art gallery network, and the foundations" (111). Elitist modernism excludes and marginalises certain forms of culture and art, but in contemporary culture, Jameson states, the previously excluded have become central cultural products: "My point is that until the present day those things have been secondary or minor features of modernist art, marginal rather than central, and that we have something new when they become the central features of cultural production" (123).

In connection to the previously analysed Foucauldian theory on the intellectual—the erudite and the subjugated knowledges—it is necessary to question those mechanisms that determine the products that gain prestige and status and the products that are set on the margins, so as to ultimately deconstruct certain traditions of power that classify what is accepted and what is not. Foucault and other critics emphasised the importance and role of those excluded knowledges that are as valid as the traditional

and reputed ones, and which have begun to represent a leading tendency in contemporary societies. Even before Foucault's claims appeared, other authors had begun to consider the value of popular and working-class cultural forms, not only in the constitution of contemporary culture, but also as perfectly legitimate objects of analysis. Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, in their key work *The Popular Arts* (1964), contributed to the debate on the value of popular culture products—concretely popular music—and the need to be inclusive with new forms of popular culture. As the authors stated: "In our study particular weight is given to the nature and quality of popular entertainment for young people […] And then to attempt an evaluation of the quality of the culture itself" (2006: 45-46). Hall and Whannel's aim was to counteract the prejudice of classifying popular culture as inferior and value the authenticity of any cultural product:

> There are counter-forces at work which dismiss *all* pop music simply because of its teenage connections and its cult qualities. This reaction is just as dangerous since it is based upon prejudice. It springs in part from the inability of adults to establish their own points of reference in relation to popular culture. (50)

These authors credited the value of popular culture forms as opposed to a previous validation of elitist cultural and artistic constructs, and they maintained that popular culture, as non-elitist, could also have a genuine and authentic value.

Thus, an analysis of British intellectuals and Blairism from the perspective of Cultural Studies requires the recognition that culture forms a *whole way of life*. Drawing from this assertion, this dissertation represents an eclectic study of many different kinds of textual and cultural constructs produced by a multitude of subversive intellectual figures. These textual and cultural products are representative of both high and low cultural forms and react similarly against a specific political and historical context: Tony Blair's government (1997-2007). As stated, this study will include products that are not commonly classified as erudite culture but which are nonetheless valuable when analysing the political reactions against Blair's politics, for these unacknowledged and usually discredited products are as legitimate as literature or theory in the understanding of our present times. When analysing the counter-hegemonic intellectuals during Blair's premiership, I will focus on some of the most relevant texts—as cultural products—that these figures produced or uttered to criticise the British politics of the time. These texts belong not only to reputed areas of knowledge such as literature and theory, but also to other fields of study that revolve around popular culture and the contemporary means of

communication, namely journalism, cinema, TV series, popular music and political cartoons. Here I follow Hall and Whannel's ideas to validate the selection of these kinds of products in order to examine political critiques to Blairism.

Many critics agree that all cultural products are valuable when analysing the political culture of a period because every text is always considered to be a political construct. If culture is understood in political terms and is formed as a political structure, all kinds of cultural products are, in essence, constructs that need to be read and interpreted in political terms. Authoritative voices such as Thompson and Williams have affirmed "the importance of politically engaged readings of culture" (Walton, 2008: 118), signalling both the relevance of culture in political terms and, more importantly, the necessity to make a political analysis of engaged cultural works that aim to change the social reality. Likewise, there are cultural analysts who claim that culture is "ultimately political" and "offer competing ideological significations of the way the world is or should be" (Storey, 2006: 3). We can assume that every text, as a cultural product, is political and represents a channel for ideological meanings in the society in which it is constructed. An analysis of Blairism is inevitably a political assessment of a decade, which connects with the notion of culture as a political construct. The present study of British intellectuals and Blairism is a picture of the political atmosphere in Britain in the late 1990s and early 2000s in both its representation and construction: this study does not only portray the historical and political events of the time and what Blairism meant for Britain from a historical and political perspective; it also examines how intellectuals contributed to the national political debate by integrating contemporary politics into their writings and other public demonstrations. The intellectuals included in this study challenged Blair's governmental power and denounced perceived injustice and abuse of power. These intellectuals exerted an oppositional stand to the politics of Blair's New Labour through their committed writings and utterances, and, in the final analysis, their texts must be interpreted as political and historical products if we are to accept the contention that every cultural product is in essence historical and political.

I will thus interpret the cultural texts selected in this study as political products, from high canonical literature to unacknowledged popular culture forms. As regards literature, I follow Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield's perception of literary texts as political constructs in essence. As the authors put forth in their work *Political*

Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism (1985), every cultural text—literature included—is intrinsically political because all cultural texts are intimately linked to a particular historical moment: "Cultural materialism does not pretend to political neutrality. It knows that no cultural practice is ever without political significance" (Dollimore and Sinfield, 1985: viii). From their point of view, literature or literary texts are at the same time "linguistic entities" and "political ideologies in our society" (vii), and they are, as any other kind of cultural product, equipped with political and ideological significations. These authors demand that "the idea of literature passively reflecting history was erroneous; literature was a practice which intervened in contemporary history in the very act of representing it" (Dollimore, 1985: 10) and as is true of any other kind of cultural product, are equipped with political and ideological significations. Dollimore and Sinfield's concept of "cultural materialism" rejects the idea of literature being a static and compliant reproduction of reality; it is rather an active and committed cultural product which must be read in terms of its historical, social and political context, not only for its mirroring function, but also for its utilitarian role of writing history and making politics:

> Culture is not simply a reflection of the economic and political system, but nor can it be independent of it. Cultural materialism therefore studies the implications of literary texts in history. A play by Shakespeare is related to the context of its production—to the economic and political system of Elizabethan and Jacobean England and to the particular institutions of cultural production. (Dollimore and Sinfield, 1985: viii)

Similarly, Fredric Jameson also argued that literature helps construct contemporary culture: "Narrative occupies a privileged position in relation to history because we only have access to history through narrative structures" (Hardt and Weeks, 2001: 12). For the critic, it is necessary to assign ideological meanings to a specific historical period through texts. Like Dollimore and Sinfield, Jameson also defended the "priority of the political interpretation of literary texts" (Jameson, 1983: 17), for only by making stories can we assign meanings to reality; that is, only through a narrative construction of reality we can make sense of it. In Jameson's view, there is no possible way of detaching the text from its social and historical background. Every text, as a cultural product, is ultimately political: "The only effective liberation from such constraint beings with the recognition that there is nothing that is not social and

historical—indeed, that everything is 'in the last analysis' political" (20). In the present analysis of intellectuals and Blairism, literary texts will thus be interpreted as political constructs because they represent and portray the politics of their time from a critical and rebellious perspective and with the very specific function of understanding and ultimately changing reality.

With regard to other cultural products and forms of art, this study is indebted to the work of authors such as John A. Walker, John Berger, Graeme Turner and Victor S. Navasky, for whom art is intimately linked to the political and historical context in which it is produced. These analysts claim cultural recognition for some forms of art that are normally disqualified and set on the margins of knowledge. For these writers, particular forms of popular arts—such as images, political cartoons, and films—should be considered a powerful instrument for creating social conscience and a powerful strategy for eliciting social and political criticism. These critics reinforced the notion of art as a means to conceptualise contemporary culture and contribute, subsequently, to political struggles, for all cultural and artistic products are intrinsically ideological (Berger, 1991; Turner, 1993). The subsequent chapters of this dissertation consider popular music, films and political cartoons as legitimate ways of making a critical reading of the political reality, since it is "impossible to understand art as a social phenomenon without reference to the structure of the society within which it is produced" (Walker, 2001: 2). This study of intellectual and artistic counter-power products aims to demonstrate that "art and propaganda are not necessarily mutually exclusive" (3) and that art is therefore always political and socially influential regardless of form.

To conclude, the various definitions of the intellectual proposed by three reputed twentieth-century thinkers have guided my selection of those critical individuals who voiced oppositional reactions of Blair's government. Gramsci, Foucault and Said's theories on the intellectual contribute to typify what it means to be an intellectual, and to determine whether the writers, thinkers and cultural figures analysed here functioned as such. The intellectuals I have selected are characterised by their oppositional and critical position towards Blair's project, denouncing and opposing, with a number of political texts and cultural products, those controversial measures and political reforms that, as it is informed in the next chapter, were implemented under Blair's premiership (1997—2007).

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2. THE POLITICS OF TONY BLAIR: A CHRONOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF BLAIRISM 1997—2007

The turbulent years of Margaret Thatcher are often remembered as a convulsive era of social and political unrest. Thatcher's controversial policies broke with the 1950s welfare consensus and represented a rupture of the social harmony that protected the rights of citizens and workers. The establishment of a neo-conservative economy, based on the all-powerful capitalism and the free market, entailed a radical and subversive reaction in many spheres of British society, from workers and trade unions to youth movements and defiant personalities of the cultural sphere, to most significantly the intellectual class—writers, critics, and theorists who publicly denounced what they considered the tragic legacy of the Thatcher reforms. John Major's government reflected the beginning of a mild climate in British politics after Thatcher's resignation from power in 1990.[8] He initiated a new political cycle that was well-received by a

[8] The implementation of the Poll Tax in 1989—a tax imposed on all individuals regardless their income—provoked a widespread resistance of British society against the conservative government. It is believed that the Poll Tax became one of the reasons that contributed to Thatcher's demise, together with internal divisions in the Conservative Party over Europe and Thatcher's personal ambitions for political control (Hadley, 2014: 12). Thatcher's "iron" determination and her presidential style of leadership had begun to cause instability within the party, and rising dissident colleagues, such as Michael Heseltine, forced a leadership election that challenged Thatcher's authority. Thatcher won the first round but not with the sufficient majority, thus requiring a second ballot. As it became gradually evident that she would not win the second round, some supporters persuaded her that she should step down in order to guarantee

population weary of social protests, and the consequent rise of Tony Blair as leader of the opposition in 1994—with a modernising and inclusive discourse—predicted the consolidation of a political tranquillity that left the restless years of Thatcherism behind. For several years, the angry dissenting voices of many left-wing intellectuals seemed to abandon their role of insurgent rebels as they could anticipate the fall of the conservative rule and a soon-to-be promising era under a new Labour leader. A generalised atmosphere of optimism invaded British streets and British culture, and many received Tony Blair's fresh image with enthusiasm and hopeful expectations.

In the early 1990s when Blair began to forge his electoral programme, different liberal intellectuals could glimpse that despite the urgent need of a change of government, Blair's political alternative distanced traditional Labour principles and slyly embraced certain aspects of the Thatcherite rhetoric. Many of these writers, journalists and theorists cautiously analysed Blair's rise from an expectant and apprehensive distance. Despite initial suspicion and distrusting views that perceived Blair's U-turn in classical social democracy, the majority of British society and most liberal thinkers welcomed the advent of Tony Blair. While Thatcherism had provoked incensed reactions in many left-wing intellectuals, the arrival of this young politician seemed to mitigate the previous confrontation. New Labour was then the party that took exasperated intellectuals to its side and gathered support at all fronts, and yet, some few brains of the time could foretell the eventual disappointment of the British intelligentsia with the Blair government: despite optimistic illusions with New Labour, Blair did not reverse Thatcher's reforms and he was instead accused of consolidating the values and beliefs of Thatcherism. As Blair's project took shape in government after 1997 and throughout three terms in office, left-wing writers and critics eventually opposed the nature of Blair's modernisation and rejected the idea that society had to irretrievably face the authority of the free market on the public domain, all of which proved that Blair's reforms ultimately normalised the 1980s neoliberalism. Consequently, many social sectors, including intellectuals, finally raised their voice against Blair's ideological renovation and reacted with turbulent demonstrations and street protests against his decisions, all with the aim of exposing—through a wide range of academic, media, and literary texts—that the Labour Party had abandoned the path of social

the party unity and the possibility of victory in the next general election. Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and Chancellor of the Exchequer John Major became Heseltine's opponents in the second round of the leadership election, being Major the one who secured the votes to become the new Prime Minister (13).

democracy and had become the party of the establishment, the middle and the business class.

The present chapter therefore offers a brief introduction to most political reforms that were implemented under Blair's premiership, reforms that provoked the oppositional reaction of many critics and thinkers who had previously welcomed New Labour with enthusiasm, but who gradually became disenchanted with the government in the face of what it was, in their view, Blair's conservative radicalism. This chapter opens with Blair's ambition to achieve power from the moment when he was elected leader of Labour in 1994, as well as the reforms that he implemented to make the party electable, namely changes in the party ideology—the Third Way. This chapter also examines Blair's early reforms and decisions as Prime Minister since 1997: the successful peace process in Northern Ireland, the constitutional reform, a controversial foreign policy a propos of the Kosovo war in 1999, and a criticised approach to domestic policy that showed how Blair had abandoned social ethics in economy, welfare and employment.

Blair's second term began in 2001 shortly before the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, an event that determined Blair's subsequent tenure by causing two wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The Prime Minister's unilateral decision to join the US in the war and his neglect of certain home responsibilities arouse widespread criticism, thus rendering the turning point in his popularity and the decline of his leadership. Iraq eclipsed Blair's second-term domestic agenda, a programme on health and education that began during his first term and was symbolically controversial and extensively disputed during his second tenure.

Despite Blair's low popularity, he won a third consecutive election in 2005. The electoral victory was possible due to a positive growth of British economy that had overcome the spread disappointment with Labour's investment in public services, coupled with the fact that by 2005, the middle-class voter was prone to a party of the centre. Since then and throughout Blair's last years in office, the long-lasting confrontation between Blair and Brown, and permanent rebellions in his cabinet made Blair's last reforms unfeasible, which together with constant department reshuffles yielded the government's deterioration and Blair's departure on 27 June 2007.

Although it is soon to assess the historical legacy of Blairism, it would be fair to say that there was an evolution from 1997, when he came to power acclaimed as one of the most famous political leaders in Britain, to 2007 when he left the leadership of the

Labour Party and resigned as PM bogged down by internal divisions in his cabinet and a fall in opinion polls. The general sentiment was that Blair's project proved especially unsatisfying and was, as Anthony Seldon states, "a tale of vast unfulfilled potential […] still largely rhetoric and good intentions" (2005: 691). Disillusion and disenchantment were evident for many critics who argued that although Blair achieved some positive reforms, the war in Iraq, and his determination to embrace Thatcher's legacy left New Labour as a mere unfinished political programme with numerous reactionary and disapproved decisions.

2.1 THE ORIGINS OF BLAIRISM

Tony Blair entered Number 10 on 1 May 1997 after a frenetic ascendancy prompted by a radical transformation of the Labour Party. Frustrated with the party's consecutive defeats in previous general elections, Blair was determined to reform the party by deepening into the cautious modernising attempts of former political leaders—such as Neil Kinnock and John Smith—as the only way of making the party electable and achieve power. Blair's certainty that Thatcher's reforms were irreversible and that globalisation and the market state were inevitable led this young leader to undertake a modernisation of classical social democracy and detach the new party, now rebranded as New Labour, from the hard left that the so-called Old Labour represented. However, Blair's awareness of the need to address loyal Labour voters to win elections made him opt for a "Third Way" in which "the dynamism of capitalism had to be reconciled with social cohesion, the inequalities of the market with fairness. Individualism and community, economic efficiency and social justice need not be at odds; they could complement and reinforce one another" (Gray, 2004: 39). New Labour was not meant to be a distinctive ideological force, but a political hybrid of right-wing and left-wing policies that sought to serve both private enterprise and public services on even terms. The aim was to put market mechanisms at the service of health and education and in benefit of the weakest sectors of society. Offering a middle ground alternative—centred on pragmatism and *realpolitik*—New Labour departed from Thatcherism and went beyond:

> Labour Modernizers see New Labour as a "project" that is taking politics "beyond Thatcherism." New Labour believes in the values of social democracy but has devised radically new means for pursuing them different from those used by Old Labour or Thatcherism. New Labour is taking a path that is neither the first way of the old Left nor the second way of the New Right. Being post-Thatcherite involves taking a "third way." (Driver and Martell, 2002: 67)

In his conviction to change the party's old foundations, Blair removed Clause IV of the party constitution, thus abandoning the party ideals of public ownership and redistribution.[9] Additionally, Blair also realised that recent social changes and the gradual disappearance of the working class decreased the possibilities of the party to win elections, this being the reason why the middle-class electorate—the so-called Middle England that was traditionally attached to the Conservative Party—was essential for an electoral triumph:[10]

> The electoral pressures facing Labour, especially within the broader context of economic, social and cultural change; the failures of the Labour Party in government in the 1960s and 1970s, […] the hegemony of Thatcherism in the 1980s […] All of these came together to inform the process of reform that gripped the Labour Party. (Driver and Martell, 2006: 5)

In May 1997, Tony Blair's New Labour achieved a landslide victory repeated in two other consecutive elections in 2001 and 2005, which was eventually considered a historic feat for the Labour Party. Harold Wilson's desires to make the Labour Party "the natural party of government" were fulfilled under Tony Blair, who met the long-awaited expectations (Pattie, 2004: 32). Yet, this success was only possible after New

[9] Blair's campaign to achieve a new Clause IV began with his first speech as leader of the party in Blackpool in October 1994. From then onwards, Blair's campaign for the new Clause IV entailed a hard process and a number of conferences all over the British territory to persuade party leaders of "the need of fundamental change in the policies of the party" (Reitan, 2003: 159). Blair's "passionate" speeches resulted in a successful vote in favour of modernisation at a party conference in April 1995 (Rentoul, 1995). It had nevertheless been an arduous campaign since the hard left of the party and the unions fiercely opposed the change.

[10] In the sociological spectrum, the term "Middle England" refers to the growing middle class that developed after the Second World War and the establishment of the Welfare State, a phenomenon owed to the improvement in living standards. The gradual embourgeoisement of the working class approached the economic condition, professional occupations and class values of the middle class. However, and according to Lawrence James, although Middle England had middle-class concerns and ambitions, the term applied to those who were on the lower layer of the middle class or had recently entered the category (2008: 468). The term dates back to Margaret Thatcher's years when she brought the conservative middle classes of England to the same level as Nixon's idea of Middle America; that is, the rural (republican) American middle class. In this case, "the 'middle' being referred to is neither geographical nor sociological, but essentially rhetorical" (Cannadine, 2000: 183).

Labour had abandoned the leftist principles that ruled the old Labour Party, and addressed a centred-minded electorate that had previously supported Margaret Thatcher and her conservative values. The making of New Labour and the need to attract a new electorate was also deeply ingrained in a new conception of British society. The New Britain that matched old British values with modernity became popularly known as "Cool Britannia," rendering the country young and dynamic, creative, tolerant, multicultural, and open-minded, and willing to receive the new millennium with a new government and a new national identity.[11] That New Britain required reforms that began within the Labour Party, and that were extended to national policies when New Labour arrived in power. From then onwards, Blairism took shape throughout three consecutive terms (1997—2007) beginning with a significant support of British society and British intelligentsia in the 1997 general election. After a brief honeymoon of political enthusiasm, British intellectuals—writers, theorists and personalities of the cultural sphere—eventually denounced and complained about the constitution and formation of Blair's New Labour, expressing their growing disaffection with a Labour government that was supposed to reverse the effects of Thatcherism.

2.1.1 Blair's Project: The Making of New Labour

> If the world changes and we don't, then we become of no use to the world. Our principles cease being principles and just ossify into dogma. Parties that do not change die, and this party is a living movement not a historical monument. (Blair, 1996b: 48)

Critics, analysts and intellectuals have often deplored the fact that Tony Blair abolished the founding principles of the Labour Party by transforming the party of the workers and the poor into a neo-conservative institution associated with bourgeoisie and the business class. Although many of these critical voices stressed the disappointment prompted by the Blair reforms after the initial optimistic expectations put on the new Labour leader, some analysts considered that there were reasons to believe that Blair's

[11] "Cool Britannia" was a catchphrase used in Britain during the late 1990s. It referred to the cultural explosion of music, fashion and art, and it was intimately linked to the rise of New Labour, as Blair's political project was inspired in notions of youth and modernity (Osgerby, 2005: 127).

U-turn in the renewal of the party could be envisaged much before he reached Number 10 in 1997.

When Blair joined the Labour Party in the autumn of 1975, "he was not a natural Labour Party man" (Temple, 2006: 38). Many experts state that his personal and educational background at public schools—such as Fettes College and Oxford—his English accent despite the fact that he was born and brought up in Scotland, and his family antecedents (his father was a member of the Conservative Party who taught Blair values such as discipline and responsibility) made him a perfect candidate for the Social Democratic Party (SDP) or even for the Conservative Party. At first, Blair spent his pre-university youth searching into his own interests and ambitions—mostly in the field of rock music playing guitar and singing at a rock band. Yet, he finally went into politics influenced by his mentor Peter Thompson who instilled in Blair Christian beliefs and left-wing politics during his years at Oxford (Radice, 2010: 10). Following his determination to improve the state of the country, Blair started his political career and after several frustrated attempts, he was finally elected as Labour MP for Sedgefield in 1983. During the next decade, and coinciding with Thatcher's whole mandate, Blair configured his political identity participating in the ideological schism that took place within the Labour Party: after the defeat in the general election of 1982, the party celebrated a leadership election in 1983 that confronted Neil Kinnock on the centre-left, and Roy Hattersley on the centre-right (42). Blair's support for Kinnock eventually favoured his own career for he happened to make friends and crucial connections; such was the case of Peter Mandelson, who was Director of Communications under Kinnock, and journalist Alastair Campbell. These two men, together with Philip Gould and his live-long friend Anji Hunter, would be the future architects of *the project*: New Labour.

According to statements by experts such as Anthony Seldon, Blair's support for Kinnock was essential to understanding his future rebranding programme. Kinnock led the revisionist centre-left branch that was opposed to the hard left of Tony Benn, being Kinnock's modernising stool later headed by John Smith in 1992. It was precisely under Smith's leadership that Blair would radicalise his attitude: frustrated with Smith's slow reforms, Blair was convinced that electoral success drew from a more radical modernisation based on wealth creation—instead of redistribution—competitive market, rupture with the trade unions, and commitment to rights and responsibilities among other tenets (Seldon, 2005: 148). When in 1994 the leader of the Labour Party John Smith died, many encouraged Blair to stand for the leadership election. However, Blair

did not want to confront who was thought to be Smith's heir, Gordon Brown, a very good friend of his at that moment. Some of the architects of New Labour, such as Philip Gould and Peter Mandelson,[12] rapidly supported Blair as they considered him to be a better candidate, and at risk of dividing the party, Brown and Blair reached an agreement at the well-known *Granita* Restaurant on 31 May 1994: Brown accepted not to stand for leadership election against Blair on condition that he would have complete competence over economic and social policies, and would inherit power sometime during the second term (Radice, 2010: 76-77; Keegan, 2003: 39). Blair's early ambitions and his determination to strategise and become leader of Labour would be later satirised by media figures and intellectuals that ridiculed Blair's machinations at the *Granita* deal, such was the case of Stephen Frears's film *The Deal* (2003) that is analysed in this dissertation (see chapter six, 6.2).

As the leader of the opposition, Blair initiated the project of what he, together with Alastair Campbell, rebranded as New Labour, a programme of reforms that changed the image of the party and was opposed to the classical principles of Old Labour. New Labour criticised too much state intervention and the "tax-and-spend" policies that had provided a negative reputation to the economic performance of previous Labour governments: "Certainly the idea of 'New Labour' proved an essential weapon in Labour's armoury of political communications. It allowed the self-styled modernizers to project an image of a future Labour government to voters that would not be like any Old Labour government" (Driver and Martell, 2006: 15). In addition, one of the most controversial reforms in this strategic modernisation process was the removal of Clause IV of the party constitution, which "may have only been symbolic, but this is

[12] Peter Mandelson was a prominent figure in the making of New Labour for being not only an active participant in the rebranding of the party, but also in the promotion of Tony Blair as leader at the expense of Gordon Brown. Mandelson has often been considered a genius in the shadow, or as he was commonly known, a "Prince of Darkness" for he seemed to be a real strategist working behind the scenes (Radice, 2010: xviii). Mandelson was determinant in the modernisation of the Labour Party, which he had been preparing for over a decade while being Director of Communications under Kinnock. When Labour won the 1997 election, Mandelson was eventually named Minister without Portfolio, a post designed to be merely at Blair's disposal. Among other functions, he was the chief advisor deciding about media strategies and "coordinat[ing] the presentation of policy" in government (Mandelson, 2010: 219-220). In 1998, he was appointed Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and Northern Ireland Secretary in 1999. After several scandals, he was forced to leave the government, returning in 2003, in the shadows and with no official post, to help Blair and the policy making team in the public service reform. Later that year, Blair finally offered him to be EU Commissioner in Brussels, working as European Trade Delegate (389).

precisely why some members objected to the change: the clause was of ideological, emotive importance, embodying what they had been fighting for during all their years of involvement in the party" (Lees-Marshment, 2001:189). With this radical decision, Blair distanced the party from its traditional commitment to public ownership and the trade unions, and suddenly, "the government sought to raise the productivity of public services by introducing procedures and practices from the private sector, challenging the existing culture and systems" (Faucher-King and Le Galés, 2010: 92).

Some left-wing intellectuals approved this new approach of the Labour Party. Figures such as Stuart Hall, Eric Hobsbawm and Will Hutton, among others, agreed with the reformist branch of the Kinnock and the Blair revolutions considering that the removal of Clause IV had been a long-acclaimed reform by relevant revisionist thinkers. However, regardless of their initial support for Blair's reforms, these theorists later stepped back and opposed Blair's modernisation since it globally turned, in their opinion, into a betrayal of the principles of the party. During these years, many reforms sought to reassert the party's identity: the rebranding of the party's name ("New" Labour), the "Third Way" ideology, a new political agenda—committed to the market state and detached from the trade unions—and the promotion of a new populist and young leader greatly contributed to make the party electable. However, critics suggested that this rebranding of the party "[was] part of the stylization of politics in which image and presentation [had] become more important than ideas and policies" (Driver and Martell, 2006: 16). In this respect, many writers and novelists of the time parodied and ridiculed Blair's modernisation, his apparent new conservatism, and his obsession with image and presentation. Some of these relevant texts will be analysed throughout this study, such is the case of Martin Amis's novel *The Information* (1995), Margaret Drabble's *The Witch of Exmoor* (1996), and essays by Fay Weldon—*Godless in Eden* (1999)—and Julian Barnes—*Letters from London* (1995)—all of which criticised Blair's discourse of modernity (see chapter four, 4.1).

2.1.2 Ideology: The Third Way

> There will, inevitably, be overlap between Left and Right in the politics of the twenty-first century. The era of the grand ideologies—all-encompassing, all-pervasive, total in their solutions, and often dangerous—is over. In particular, the battle between market and public sector is over. There will be boundary disputes but not war. (Blair, 1996b: 213)

Revisionism of social democracy has been a recurrent topic since the second half of the twentieth century, thus being an essential part of the historical development of the Labour Party. As the theorist of the Third Way Anthony Giddens dictates, social democracy is inherently prone to ideological revision: "I believe social democracy can not only survive, but prosper, on an ideological as well as practical level. It can only do so, however, if social democrats are prepared to revise their pre-existing views more thoroughly than most have done so far. They need to find a third way" (2000: vii). Blair's project, with his modernising quest to build a new party and a new image of the country, was not a new phenomenon. Stephen Driver and Luke Martell suggest that Blair's reforms reflected a continuation of the modernising trend that had started in the Labour Party in the 1950s when Hugh Gaitskell—together with Tony Crosland—propounded the need to rethink social democracy and to question the Keynesian principles that postwar economy demanded (Driver and Martell, 2002: 19). Tony Crosland, in his book *The Future of Socialism* (1956), underlined that market capitalism and its subsequent economic growth entangled benefits in public services that served the purpose of reaching equality and social justice. For Crosland, it was not unreasonable to achieve the target of equal opportunities and redistribution of wealth by renouncing to public ownership and public control:

> The Party must recognize that its identification in the public mind with austerity, rationing, and restrictive controls is highly damaging, and that we are in grave danger of allowing the Tories to run away with the kudos of being the Party of prosperity and high consumption. We should now proudly proclaim that fact, though it seems almost incredible that we should need to do so, that we want to see individuals happy, and rich, and enjoying what in the past have been solely the luxuries of the upper classes; and in the process we should take a long stride forward towards the classless society. No doubt the speed of our advance must depend on the urgency of other claims; but let us at least make our objective known. (Crosland, 2006: 253)

Revisionism has been a constant feature in social democratic parties that strive for being politically updated and competing with the neoliberal alternative of conservative parties. In this sense, "social democrats are by nature revisionists" (Driver and Martell, 2002: 29), and Blair's New Labour was simply the last link in the chain of reformation within British social democracy after Gaitskell in the 1950s, the modernising attempts of Harold Wilson in the 1960s, and Neil Kinnock and John Smith from the 1980s onwards. However, Blair's radicalism lay in putting into practice all the reforms that preceding leaders had formerly suggested, but never implemented, namely the removal of Clause IV from the Labour Party constitution.

All the reforms that detached classical social democracy from its leftist roots gradually approached the borders of conservatism. The evidence that globalisation and the market state have proliferated in contemporary society, along with the profound consequences of the Thatcherite legacy, the identity crisis within the Labour Party, the dissolution of the welfare consensus and the disappearance of Marxism ultimately forced the left to move rightwards (Giddens, 2000; Driver and Martell, 2006). As a result, Blair's modernisation endorsed the market state and the neoliberal precept of wealth creation as compatible with socialist values such as equality of opportunity and redistribution.[13] This middle-ground alternative, eventually called the Third Way, was an amalgam of opposite aspirations characterised first and foremost by pragmatism and *realpolitik*, as well as by political measures that were applied to satisfy both enterprise and social justice, equality and individual freedom. According to Giddens, the Third Way "refers to a framework of thinking and policy-making that seeks to adapt social democracy to a world which has changed fundamentally over the past two or three decades. It is a third way in the sense that it is an attempt to transcend both old-style social democracy and neoliberalism" (2000: 26). Similarly, Will Leggett summarised the concept of the Third Way as follows:

> The third way is premised on a critique of the first two "ways:" on the one hand, what it identifies as the "old left," consisting of socialism (generically conceived) and post-war Keynesian social democracy, and on the other the New Right neoliberalism of the 1980s and 1990s. The Third Way is an attempt to synthesize what is held to be positive about these two previous traditions, while rejecting their negative aspects. Third Wayers support the commitment of social democracy to

[13] Redistribution of wealth was not a prime goal during the Blair years. Inequalities between the rich and the poor actually increased, as will be demonstrated throughout this chapter.

> equality of opportunity and social justice, and see an important role for government in delivering them. […] Consequently, Third Wayers acknowledge the neoliberal emphasis on the dynamic role of markets in generating innovation and individual responsibility. (2005: 3)

Detractors of the Third Way approach suggested that the term caused confusion. The ambiguity derived from its commitment to leftist principles such as equality and social justice, and, at the same time, to conservative policies such as the protection of a liberal economy that favoured private trade and industry. Furthermore, it was also implied that the so-called Third Way lacked a coherent political ideology and was instead a mere window dressing for neoliberal politics. According to this view, the Third Way was simply understood as a marketing tool: "The choice of the specific label 'Third Way' to describe the modernized ideology of the centre-left may well go down as one of the most ill-judged pieces of political marketing in history" (3). Opponents also pointed out that the Third Way was an electoral strategy: by rebranding Labour as New Labour, Blair tried to "rebuild the electoral appeal and credibility of a left-of-centre political platform" (Gamble, 2005: 431). The party's new denomination struggled to captivate a greater electorate by selling a political product half way between neoliberalism and social democracy, but precisely for that reason it was accused of lacking specific and distinctive policies and of being a right-wing party with a centre-ground appearance: "The Third Way has often been derided as having no policy substance. The alternative criticism is that it has policy substance but it is simply neo-liberalism under a different label" (434).

Among the critics of Blair's ideological approach, who endeavoured to reveal these theoretical incongruences, a leading intellectual figure was analyst and theorist Alex Callinicos, whose books such as *Against the Third Way: An Anti-capitalist Critique* (2001) and other essays published in journals and newspapers openly opposed the contradictions of Blair's ideology, his disguised conservatism and his apparent abandonment of social democracy. Likewise, writers of the journal *Marxism Today* (i.e. Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques, and Eric Hobsbawm), who had sustained the need to revise the left-wing values of the Labour Party in the 1980s, suddenly criticised Blair's performance in Number 10 for his commitment to neoliberalism and his promotion and defence of the market state and globalisation. Similarly, novelists Julian Barnes and Fay Weldon, writing for reputed newspapers, also contributed to deconstruct Blair's discourse on the Third Way by pointing at his contradictions and desires to please

everyone. All these samples of intellectual resistance will consequently be analysed in the present study (see chapter four, 4.1, and chapter five, 5.1 and 5.2).

2.1.3 The 1997 Election: Key to Electoral Success

> With Neil Kinnock's election as leader we began a long march of renewal. That project was taken forward by John Smith. We owe it to them both, and above all to the people who most need a Labour government, to finish the journey from protest to power. (Blair, 1996a: 3)

On 1 May 1997, the Labour Party won the general election with a 179-seat majority in the House of Commons after eighteen years of conservative government. This was an electoral triumph for many left-wing intellectuals who hoped the Labour candidate would beat the Tories and would take them out of power. Even despite the fact that many of these intellectuals were suspicious of Blair's reforms, Labour's landslide victory was globally assessed as a political feat and became a turning point in the history of the Labour Party: after having been the party of outsiders and minorities, it suddenly became "the natural party of government" (Pattie, 2004: 32).

The 1997 victory was subsequently examined by many different experts who were eager to evaluate the causes of such historic triumph. The figure of Tony Blair was considered one of the essential elements of the electoral success, but there were other factors that contributed to change British history. John Major's legacy and the generalised disenchantment with the Conservative Party on the one hand, and the reforms within the Labour Party and its newly constituted relationship with the media on the other were among the causes for this milestone. In 1997, the conservative government's reputation was undermined after eighteen years in office. The Tories suffered constant internal conflicts that weakened the stability of the party and wrecked the image of Major's government, thus facilitating New Labour's access to power. As Geoffrey Wheatcroft suggests, "the Tories were in a pitiful condition" (2005: 196), which caused the consequent large abstention of conservative votes (Russell, 2000: 17). It was precisely the negotiation for the European project of Maastricht in 1991 one of the factors that most affected the Conservative Party. Although Major himself declared that he wanted Britain at the heart of Europe, internal conflicts with the right-wing and pro-Thatcherite branch of the party forced him to negotiate the exclusion of Britain in

the single currency and the opt-out from the Social Chapter (Marr, 2009: 485-500; Wheatcroft, 2005: 192).[14] On domestic politics, economic difficulties wounded Major's second term after the general election of 1992: the unpopular restoration of the council tax, the rise of unemployment, and privatisations in the British Railways, the coal industry, and the Post Office caused controversy, the destruction of employment and subsequent strikes and public protests (Wheatcroft, 2005: 192; Marr, 2009: 495). Yet, Major's downfall began with an economic fiasco, the so-called *Black Wednesday*: "The first thing that happened was that they lost their economic policy in a single day when the pound fell out of the European exchange mechanism" (Marr, 2009: 489).[15]

Nevertheless, New Labour's reforms and the new ideological approach that took place under Blair's modernisation were as important as Major's legacy in order to win the 1997 election. First and foremost, internal changes within the mechanisms of the party organisation contributed as a last resort to change the image of the Labour Party: a new electoral model for leadership elections—the one member-one vote system—,[16] the replacement of Clause IV from the party constitution, a brand-new electoral programme, and last but not least an appeal to a pro-Thatcherite centre-ground electorate ultimately improved the image of the Labour Party and made it electable (Crewe, 2001: 68). All in all, "the arrival of New Labour in power was itself the culmination of a long process (and at times confrontational and traumatic) of internal party reform" (Coates, 2000b: 3).

Additionally, the effectiveness of a renovated electoral campaign found a correspondence in the polls. New Labour realised that advertising and media relations could play a determining role in the party's political victory. Philip Gould and Peter

[14] A Social Chapter is a European agreement that guarantees working conditions. In the British context, this agreement would commit Britain to the European Union laws, which challenged the trade union reforms applied under Thatcher. Britain finally decided to opt out from the Social Chapter and the monetary union because of internal opposition in Major's government (Marr, 2009: 485).

[15] Black Wednesday (16 September 1992) is known as the day when the British government had to suspend its membership from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) after the pound sterling suffered a peerless devaluation. Major's government experienced the greatest economic fiasco, which caused a loss of credibility in the conservative economy. At that time, the pound was integrated in the ERM with an exchange rate that could not fluctuate more than 6%. This meant that monetary authorities interceded to guarantee the margins of the exchange rate. The strongest currency was the Deutsche Mark and the rest of currencies made huge efforts to follow its appreciation. Speculator George Soros sold a great amount of pounds in order to buy marks, causing a domino effect in other investors. The Bank of England was finally obliged to buy its own currency to avoid a strong devaluation. On 16 September 1992 the British interest rates, which were at 15%, were too high and the government was forced to suspend the pound from the ERM at risk of bankruptcy (see Marr, 2009: 489-492).

[16] The proposal of a new voting system to elect the party leader, the "one member, one vote" system, symbolised an attempt to democratise the electoral process by favouring direct individual participation; however, at the same time, it meant blocking the traditional collective votes of the trade unions which had previously represented 40% of the total vote (Coates, 2000b: 3).

Mandelson, who were in charge of the campaign, fostered a new, modern and more attractive image of New Labour through and thanks to a visual campaign on TV, and the support of tabloid newspapers like *The Sun*:[17] "The 'marketization' of the 1997 campaign became shorthand for the changes in—and therefore the newly found electability of—Labour under Blair" (Russell, 2000: 20). Their success was therefore rooted in the professionalisation and Americanisation of the electoral campaign (Pattie, 2001: 47),[18] in which a powerful and attractive leader like Blair himself, a good communicator, young and good looking, sensitive, straightforward, and able to catch people's emotions epitomised the new modernity of the party. According to different opinion polls, Tony Blair's popularity was the highest among the political leaders in 1997 and very much after he entered Downing Street (Russell, 2000: 24) since he took great pains to be approachable and empathise with the people's mood. One of the best-known examples of Blair's capacity to connect with the British people was precisely shortly after the 1997 election when Princess Diana died at a car crash. It became a decisive moment that Blair used in his benefit, since "very few Prime Ministers enjoy a defining moment where they are seen to embody the spirit of the nation" (Seldon, 2005: 279). Blair then uttered one of his most popular speeches:

> People everywhere, not just here in Britain, kept faith with Princess Diana. They liked her, they loved her, they regarded her as one of the people. She was the People's Princess and that is how she will stay, how she will remain in our hearts and our memories for ever. (In Richards, 2004: 174)

Blair would always be in debt to Alastair Campbell as regards the consolidation of his reputation as a popular politician. Initially political editor of *The Sunday* and *Daily Mirror*, Campbell joined Blair's project as Press Spokesman in the shadow cabinet. He

[17] Rupert Murdoch's support for Blair was considered essential in Labour's consecutive electoral victories from 1997 onwards. Back in 1994, Blair took great pains to gain Murdoch's support and secure a positive relationship with the media tycoon when, for instance, he travelled to Australia to participate in a News Corporation conference promising Murdoch's newspapers a special treatment (the Labour government eventually conceded exclusive articles and interviews to Murdoch's press) (Quinault, 2011: 203). It would be at the 1997 election campaign when Murdoch publicly stood for Labour (203).

[18] Since the Second World War, the role of television and media in politics has gradually increased. By the end of the twentieth century, New Labour's campaign was characterised by a professionalisation of the electoral race: a media oriented campaign increased control of slogans and improved communication strategies leading the party to take advantage of the media's power to influence on the electorate. The over-controlling American style, where monitoring machinery supervises and filters every comment on the party, was applied in the UK, together with the adoption of the figures of spin-doctors and focus groups (Pattie, 2001: 47).

was later appointed Chief Press Secretary (1997) and finally Director of Communications and Strategy (2001) until his departure in 2003. Campbell was in charge of media relations by conveying the government's messages and policies and building an intimate relationship between Whitehall and the press. His position became essential for Blair's government since he improved both the party and Blair's image by releasing convenient news and advising Blair on speeches and effective slogans. At the 1997 general election, Campbell guaranteed the media's support not only from political editors in the conservative press like *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*, but also from liberal editors and intellectuals such as Will Hutton (*The Observer*) and Andrew Marr (*The Independent*) (Seldon, 2005: 254-255).

However, the importance of media relations under New Labour moved beyond the 1997 election. Generally speaking, the Blair years signified a turning point in communication strategies, as Blair was the first Prime Minister that devoted so much effort to his relations with the media: New Labour was "obsessed with news management" (Scammell, 2001: 511). The power of media to win elections and secure the party's popularity made New Labour dependent on political spin and manipulation of publications so as to ultimately influence public opinion. In this context, the figure of Alastair Campbell as "spin-doctor" *par excellence,* a hybrid character between journalist and politician that controlled newspapers' publications and leaked convenient messages (Franklin, 2004: 94), supposed the transformation of traditional press officers. As Peter Oborne pointed out, "spin-doctor was more than just a smart term to glamorize press officers: it usefully indicated a change both in role and status" (2005: 150).[19]

Although the relations of the party with the media were very positive at the beginning of New Labour's first term, the tables were turned: "The same media—often the same journalists—who had once thrown rose petals at Tony Blair for his vision, integrity and strength now scourged him with scorpions as a fantasist, a manipulator and an autocrat" (Rawnsley, 2001: 378). The media gradually became more and more critical about the government and accused Campbell of bullying journalists to influence

[19] The figure of "spin-doctor" appeared with the New Labour government. Its main function was to have direct contact with the media in order to filter biased information, and manipulate and influence publications. As both the government and the media needed one another, they collaborated sharing policy information and influencing public opinion through convenient news. As Alan Finlayson suggested, "clearly politicians in and out of government desire and need media coverage, and are prepared to put a great deal of time, money and effort into media management […] Policy may be influenced directly by presentational concerns, for example when the government promises not to enact policies unfavourable to the interests of powerful media figures such as Rupert Murdoch" (2003: 49).

publications: "There is Blair's view, that Labour is primarily reactive to the conditions of modern media, refusing to become victims to an ever-more voracious and cynical journalism and attempting to counter-act the traditional hostility of the national press" (Scammell, 2001: 511). As will be shown in this study, some of these analysts and journalists openly reacted and attacked the government's performance; Andrew Marr, Simon Jenkins, Poly Toynbee, Suzanne Moore, Hugo Young, and Peter Wilby, among many others, would be particularly inquisitive with New Labour's reforms. Other media figures such as filmmaker Armando Iannucci also denounced the obscure and rotten relationship that New Labour established with the media, and satirically criticised—in his TV series *The Thick of It* (2005-2012)—the absolute control that politicians and the government exerted on daily publications. They all disapproved the government's determination to remain in power at all costs: "The Project was still controlled by less than a handful of men, each one consumed with maintaining his grip on power" (Rawnsley, 2001: 393). Finally, fiction writers also contributed to satirise Blair's special relationship with the media, such was the case of Jonathan Coe in his novel *The Closed Circle* (2004).

In summation, the newly forged relationship of New Labour with the media gave the party political power and electoral resonance. The conservatives' lost reputation, and New Labour's modernising reforms made possible to achieve a historic landslide majority in the Commons in 1997. As Dennis Kavanagh put it: "Blair's courting of business, the Murdoch press and middle England have been part of a strategy of inclusiveness and making Labour a catch-all electoral party" (2001: 10).

2.2 BLAIR'S FIRST TERM (1997—2001)

Critics and experts often comment that Blair's first term was his most successful period. Despite early disenchantment among some intellectuals that quickly opposed Blair's U-turn in Labour policies, many voices defended the overall positive outcome of his first years in Number 10. There were many reforms that transformed the nature of the Labour Party, and despite sharp criticism by left-wing thinkers, Blair was often acclaimed for having achieved long wished feats.

2.2.1 The Good Friday Agreement (1998)

> Today I hope that the burden of history can at long last start to be lifted from our shoulders. Even now this will not work unless in your will and in your mind you make it work; unless you extend the hand of friendship to those who were once your foes. (Blair in Rawnsley, 2001: 138-139)

Peace in Northern Ireland was probably Blair's major achievement. It has remained part of his most successful legacy as he made the process a personal priority and achieved what no other Prime Minister had before. However, Blair's success was not completely genuine since the peace programme derived from the previous conservative government: the Joint Framework Documents (JFDs) represented Major's first attempt towards agreement in 1995, but ceasefire ended when the IRA detonated a bomb in the Canary Wharf financial district in London. Tony Blair's project of retaking the peace process continued the conservative schedule and ultimately ended into a relatively stable peace in Northern Ireland (Randall, 2000: 92-93).

After the 1997 election, the new Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, and Tony Blair restarted negotiations between British Unionism—the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)—and Irish nationalism, Sinn Fein. Blair's strategic and inclusive position facilitated both UUP and Sinn Fein to join the talks (O'Leary, 2001: 455),[20] but the agreement was not meant to be easy. Blair took great pains to moderate challenging negotiations that were constantly interrupted by contradictory demands and reluctance on both sides to accept the enemy's conditions. Blair's personal involvement in the process and his determination to achieve a middle-ground agreement that reconciled the UUP and Sinn Fein led Blair to take risks by inviting unpopular Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, former IRA's chief of staff, to Downing Street for further negotiations (December 1997), a historic moment that was not devoid of controversy.

[20] UUP (Ulster Unionist Party) represented the majority party in Northern Ireland, mostly voted by both left- and right-wing Protestants who defended the union of Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The Ulster Unionist Party was the permanent party of a devolved government between 1922 and 1972, year in which the Northern Ireland Parliament was dissolved and direct rule from London was imposed. In the early 1970s, the party broke apart and the radical branch founded the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) led by Ian Paisley. In the 1980s and 1990s, the UUP—now formed by the moderate branch headed by David Trimble (1995—2005)—was then willing to accept negotiations with Sinn Fein after 1994 IRA's ceasefire (Hurtley et al, 1996: 321-322).

In early 1998, negotiations were temporarily suspended due to continuous violations of ceasefire. At this point, Bill Clinton's mediation helped Adams realise that it was a unique opportunity that should not be hold off (Rawnsley, 2001: 135), which allowed negotiations to move forward. On Friday 10 April 1998, both sides agreed to sign a document that would settle peace on the territory, and "sat around the same table, signifying their agreement, Unionists and Nationalists, extremes of loyalism and violent republicanism together, a tableau no one who knew anything of the history of Northern Ireland thought they had a right to expect to see" (138).[21] Although detractors suggested that the agreement was not an innovative process and resembled the 1973 agreement (Randall, 2000: 96), it was tremendously successful, and New Labour in general and Tony Blair in particular were often praised for their performance in the peace process. They achieved what no other administration had before, which was due to a compound of instrumental circumstances that benefitted the establishment of peace: the government's faith in the process and its determination to reconcile all parties helped keep neutrality in negotiations; likewise, the flexibility of both sectors to accept challenging conditions, the symbolism of "New" Labour, and Clinton's crucial contribution conferred success to the process (98-99). For Anthony Seldon, the peace process was eventually interpreted as a victory for all sides: "The final agreement was written in such a way that both sides could proclaim it was a victory to their own supporters. Trimble thus announced that the agreement made the Union stronger, while Adams said it was 'a phase in our struggle' towards a united Ireland" (2005: 360-361). The Good Friday Agreement was, therefore, a historic achievement that led to a relative peace in the territory and represented an irreversible step and a landmark model in subsequent peace processes around the world.

[21] The final agreement established a new organisation of the territory administered by a Northern Ireland government that was structured as a cross-community executive subject to proportional representation. There were also transnational institutions such as the North-South Ministerial Council that was meant to promote relationships between the North and the Irish state, and Anglo-Irish cooperation also revised constitutional terms (Randall, 2000; O'Leary, 2001; Seldon, 2005). The Good Friday Agreement led to a devolved government with competences on economy, education, health, social services, agriculture, and environment (O'Leary, 2001: 462).

2.2.2 Foreign Policy

Winston Churchill analysed British foreign affairs according to "three circles of influence" which were, in 1948, the British Empire (Commonwealth), Britain's "special relationship" with the United States, and its relationship with the European continent. I will therefore examine in this section the always-controversial integration of Britain in Europe, the Atlantic relationship with American President Clinton, and lastly, Blair's leadership in the Kosovo war, being the latter considered an example of Britain's "ethical dimension" in foreign affairs.

2.2.2.1 Europe and the Euro

> Europe is today the only route through which Britain can exercise power and influence. If it is to maintain its historic role as a global player, Britain has to be a central part of the politics of Europe. (Blair, 1996b: 283)

When Tony Blair entered Number 10, the position of Britain in Europe had been damaged after the tragic legacy of the Major premiership. The *Black Wednesday*, with the subsequent withdrawal of the pound sterling from the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in 1992 and Major's reluctance to fully commit Britain to the Maastricht Treaty compelled Blair to reconstitute relations with Europe. In this context, Blair, who was particularly pro-European and supported both Britain's membership of the ERM and the Maastricht Treaty, announced a major integration of the UK in the European Union, thus allowing a future referendum on the membership of the single currency and promising to make Britain the leading country "at the heart of Europe" (Hopkin, 2007: 82).

However, and according to different analysts who commented on Blair's performance in foreign affairs (i.e. Jim Buller, Mark Wickham-Jones, Anne Deighton), the New Labour years were marked by an apparently public support for the Union while presenting constant objections to real integration. Discrepancies within the Blair cabinet revealed that the positive intentions of Euro-enthusiasts like Blair himself, Peter Mandelson and Robin Cook clashed with the Eurosceptics' reticence, as it was the case of Gordon Brown. Still and all, the British government was globally opposed to full

integration and the idea of a federal Europe eventually made New Labour cautiously independent:

> With an Atlanticist Britain at its centre, there would be no federal Europe, but a Europe of independent nations choosing to co-operate to achieve the goals, including those of free trade, that they cannot secure alone […] Britain would stand up for its own national interests. (Deighton, 2001: 311)

The Euro was therefore one of the issues on European policies that most divided the cabinet. Brown, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in charge of economic policies, was opposed to giving up the pound, which motivated him to establish "Five Economic Tests" as a previous condition to enter the single currency. For Brown, "the decision about whether to join the single currency should not be a political one. Adopting the euro would be a question of economics and national interest, not politics and party interest" (Driver and Martell, 2006: 174-175). In this respect, critics pointed out that the economic rationale was a mere excuse to obstruct integration, thus projecting a confusing and ambiguous image between an apparent enthusiasm and a lack of real commitment to the Union: "It became increasingly apparent that the euro (and Europe) was not central to the New Labour Project" (175). Nevertheless, why did Labour take no further steps in the integration? Experts have emphasised that the pound sterling represented a symbol of the British national identity, which, together with a phobia to lose British sovereignty over national policies, prevented Britain from achieving full integration (Deighton, 2001: 316). Additionally, the euro had never been a popular theme among Rupert Murdoch's conservative press and among the British electorate as a whole: "Opinion polls have indicated that, on average, approximately 60 percent of the British public are opposed to joining the single currency" (Buller, 2001: 228), which hindered Blair's intentions to make New Labour a popular and acclaimed government and prevented the party to ultimately remain in power. These insecurities, added to objections to an alleged over-controlling European identity and the subsequent threat to the so-debated British National Identity, made the government and the country sceptical about the need to admit certain European values.

In short, historical perspective showed that New Labour's global approach to Europe entailed a positive development of British relations with the Union. Although cautious, Tony Blair was personally committed to the cause and devoted great efforts to generating a favourable image of Britain in Europe. Still and all, critics suggested that

New Labour's euro-enthusiasm was mere rhetoric, and the project lacked authentic commitment and real steps towards integration.

2.2.2.2 The Special Relationship: Clinton and the United States

> Neither the sure prevention of war, nor the continuous rise of world organization will be gained without what I have called the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples. This means a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States. (Churchill, 1974: 7289)

The Atlanticist connection between Britain and the United States under the New Labour government was an embryonic symptom of Blair's unconditional support for America during his time in office. The early constituting origins of Blair's New Labour mirrored Clinton's modernisation of the Democratic Party, the New Democrats, both parties eventually representing a model for a renewed left-of-centre ideological approach: the Third Way that Blair and Clinton advocated (Foley, 2000: 5-6). As some of the New Labour architects were especially influenced by American revisionist policies in the early 1990s—such was the case of Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Philip Gould and Jonathan Powell—they not only reproduced the American ideology (the Third Way), but also their name (New Labour), and the presidential style that Blairism eventually implemented and that triggered spread criticism.[22] At a personal level, Blair looked up to Clinton as a role-model politician so as to analyse and discover the key of his electoral success (Beech, 2006: 109). In fact, the relationship Blair-Clinton was a special one: they became close friends and shared the modernising vision that changed their respective parties (Seldon, 2005: 371).

Nevertheless, Blair and Clinton's relationship was later criticised by a number of intellectuals who opposed Blair's unconditional support for America, which led Britain to defend American interests through worldwide wars. Many of these critics pointed out that Blair's dependent attitude on the United States left British domestic affairs aside,

[22] The role of the British Prime Minister has traditionally supposed to represent the head of a cabinet leadership in which he or she is the first among equals; however, prime ministers such as Thatcher and Blair have gradually become as powerful as a president: "Presidentialism implied supreme power and that in turn implied the potential for, and the probability of, its abuse. Presidentialism, therefore, offered the opportunity to turn policy issues and political argument into a personalised debate about the individual usage of governmental authority" (Foley, 2000: 23).

and they criticised the government's hypocritical attitude for its supposed pro-European stance. Richard Loncraine's film *The Special Relationship* (2010) would be an iconic critical representation of this relationship that ridiculed the figure of a young Blair who prioritised Britain's connections with America and underestimated the European counterpart, therefore dismantling Blair's motto that Britain would serve as the bridge between Europe and the United States, and that "no choice needs to be made between the two continents" (Driver and Martell, 2006: 171).

2.2.2.3 The Ethical Dimension: Kosovo (1999)

> Non-interference has long been considered an important principle of international order. And it is not one we would want to jettison too readily. One state should not feel it has the right to change the political system of another or foment subversion or seize pieces of territory to which it feels it should have some claim. But the principle of non-interference must be qualified in important respects. Acts of genocide can never be a purely internal matter. When oppression produces massive flows of refugees which unsettle neighbouring countries then they can properly be described as "threats to international peace and security." (Chicago Speech. Blair, 1999)

In 1997, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook delivered his famous speech proclaiming the determination of the Foreign Office to endorse democracy and human rights worldwide. Cook emphasised that "our foreign policy must have an ethical dimension and must support the demands of other peoples for the democratic rights on which we insist for ourselves. The Labour Government will put human rights at the heart of our foreign policy" (Cook, 1997). New Labour's commitment to human rights reinterpreted the legitimate use of international armed forces in good ethical causes, and the war in Kosovo in 1999 was Britain's opportunity to implement the government's commitment to this "ethical dimension" and pursue peace and justice through war.

The British Prime Minster, in his ambition to eradicate dictators, was convinced that Western nations had the responsibility to urge a response to President Slobodan Milosevic's ethnic cleansing and his annihilation of the Muslim majority in Kosovo, which was causing thousands of refugees in bordering territories. Considering this motive a moral quest, Blair became the leading voice of the oppressed Kosovars and "took a central role, and showed considerable courage and force of will to achieve his

objectives" (Seldon, 2005: 392). Reticence by Western leaders in general, and Clinton in particular, to take ground action in Kosovo urged Blair's Chicago speech in April 1999 calling international community to intervene in sovereign nations on the grounds of moral duty. His speech became a landmark in Blairite public discourse, since it turned into a "rationale for later interventions" (Freedman, 2001: 300). In March 1999, with the background of television images that showed thousands of refugees abandoning their homes, Blair eventually mobilised NATO forces to attack Milosevic's Serbian army, an operation that finally ended in June 1999 when Milosevic capitulated. Tony Blair's initiative in the campaign was crucial to start the conflict, and he became an active participant in the peace process and the later plans for reconstruction (299). Ultimately, the Kosovo war rendered a turning point in Blair's political self-assurance, and he gradually relied on his own judgment to take decisions and press for future military actions (Seldon, 2005: 385).

However, many critical voices reacted against Blair's belligerent determination. Analysts and liberal intellectuals denounced that NATO was "creating for itself the right to intervene wherever and whenever it chose" (Freedman, 2001: 299). This attitude was also criticised by the left-wing press because "no good could come from Western military action […] even when directed against oppressive regimes" (293). Stephen Driver and Luke Martell also suggested, "governments are using 'ethical considerations,' at best, only when it suits them and, at worst, to justify foreign policies that are motivated by other factors" (2006: 185). For many intellectuals, New Labour's "ethical dimension" recalled an old moralising colonialism that proffered intervention and occupation as legitimate in the name of civilisation, democracy and human rights. These voices denounced the ethnocentric attitude of considering Western values and democracy the canon through which international peace should be achieved:

> There are elements of wish-fulfilment and ethnocentrism in the belief that international relations are becoming like society at home—the famous "domestic analogy"—and accordingly the new "doctrine of international community" is much a statement of preference as a guide to action. (Hill, 2001: 342)

Playwright Harold Pinter and novelist Fay Weldon denounced Blair's peace model, which was based on the privilege of taking decisions unilaterally as well as ignoring the UN rule of non-intervention with the excuse of following a moral and humanitarian cause. For other critical voices, New Labour's commitment to the ethical

dimension responded to Blair's wishes to reconstruct a new "British image overseas" by apparently protecting human rights (Lawler, 2000: 282), yet this act of window dressing was condemned for its hypocrisy, as Britain remained one of the leading arm manufacturing nations (Hill, 2001: 334-340).

2.2.3 *Scars on my Back*: Domestic Agenda (1997—2001)

Reactions against the Kosovo war provoked a generalised disappointment of the British people with their two-year-old government. Voters disapproved Blair's approach to foreign policy while leaving his domestic programme aside, which led to an electoral defeat in the 1999 election to the European Parliament and a widespread downfall in public opinion. For Andrew Rawnsley, "the voters were complaining that they were 'neglected' by the Prime Minister. The verve and dedication he displayed in the Balkans actually annoyed them. People didn't want Kosovo sorted; they wanted 'their country fixed'" (2001: 291). By 1999, Blair himself realised the slow progress of his electoral promises and was especially anxious about providing results, hence his frustration, regret and guilt for not fulfilling expectations. In this context, he uttered his well-known speech of self-accusation: "You try getting change in the public sector and public services, I bear the scars on my back after two years in government" (in Burton, 2013: 29). From then onwards, Blair focused on the implementation of his domestic programme; as his personal ambition augmented after the popularity gained with the Good Friday Agreement and the Kosovo war, Blair broadened governmental control over reforms in the public sector, and personally monitored new policies.

2.2.3.1 Welfare Reform

> Labour has always been the party that cared for the casualties of our economy and society—the unemployed, the sick, the disabled, the disenfranchised, the homeless. And we will never as a party do anything less. It is part of what makes us democratic socialists, and we are proud of it. (Blair, 1996b: 143)

The welfare state was born out of the Beveridge Report in 1942 and effectively endured throughout the second half of the twentieth century. It was founded on the belief that the state had the duty to stand surety for the well-being of citizens in terms of social

equality, redistribution of wealth, and the protection of the disadvantaged through unemployment subsidies, disability benefits, and the establishment of the social security system that was mainly structured around the National Health Service and pensions. In the late 1990s, British society had profoundly changed and distanced itself from the society of the 1950s: the collapse of public services as a result of budget deficit, the longevity of population, and the incorporation of women to the labour market forced the New Labour government to implement urgent reforms. At this point, two were the historical references for the government to follow: the neoliberal approach of the New Right based on cuts in public services, and the social democratic approach that prioritised public spending and guaranteed social equality, social justice, and, in the New Labour terminology, "social fairness" (Fairclough, 2000: 46). New Labour's final stand took the shape of the Third Way alternative. While acknowledging the importance of tackling social disadvantages, the government also secured the reduction of state control: "New Labour's welfare reform has been criticized on the one hand for being a continuation of the neo-liberal Thatcherite agenda, and on the other as typical of Labour's 'nanny state' instincts" (Annesley, 2001: 202).

New Labour's welfare reforms focused on pensions, living conditions in neglected areas, and the transformation of job search schemes in the labour market. First, in the face that the legacy of Thatcherism had impoverished British society—poverty rates had drastically risen during the previous conservative era—the new government's object of reform was to tackle poverty and the causes of social exclusion by focusing on full employment and thus reducing spending on public benefits:

> Following the conviction that employment is the best route out of exclusion and poverty, welfare reform set about reaching this goal by means of work-centred policy measures complemented by policies to improve the financial incentive of moving from benefits to work, and minimise the risk of in-work poverty. (Annesley and Gamble, 2004: 151)

As far as child poverty was concerned, the government increased public spending on low-income families and lone parents with children. Yet, and in line with New Labour's characteristic philosophy, the government promoted workfare programmes to tackle poverty by forcing workless parents into work. The government also invested in childcare and established a tax credit system that favoured in-work families, which

ultimately stimulated parents to find employment (Stewart, 2005: 314).[23] Finally, in terms of disability benefits, the government also promoted work for working-age disabled people (McKay and Rowlingson, 2008: 64).

Regarding pensions, the government was in need to respond to a rise in the number of pensioners, which reduced the government's capacity to face public spending. Among several hypothetical proposals, the government propounded an increment in the age of retirement and incentives of private savings (63). These measures were never applied, and the government instead increased the lowest pensions and established the minimum income guarantee (MIC), a system that supported lower pension incomes (Stewart, 2005: 317). The most common criticism of the Labour reform was the sparse real increase in the basic pension: 75p a week bearing in mind inflation, and by 2002, £5 a week (Annesley and Gamble, 2004: 155).

As a result of the New Labour reforms, there was a general amendment in poverty rates and living standards, but with relevant deficiencies and unfulfilled goals (Stewart, 2005: 313). Data showed that during the Blair years inequality rose until 2002 and then slowly decreased up to 2006 (McKay and Rowlingson, 2008: 58). Regarding pensioner poverty, the reduction of poverty rates was confirmed during the Blair years, falling from 27% in 1997 to 20% in 2004 (317). Broadly speaking, experts concluded that New Labour's legacy in living standards entailed a general improvement of the poorest sectors, although inequality increased and the income gap between different social layers augmented.

Lastly, in respect of employment, the traditional Old Labour position with regards to workers and trade unions suffered a radical transformation with New Labour's modernisation programme. During the 1980s, the unions' effectiveness and influence in government policies had decreased due to Thatcher's anti-union laws and privatisations of public unionised industries (Brown, 2011: 404). When Blair achieved power in 1997, he was determined to activate economy and achieve full employment by supporting business initiatives and free market competition, consequently damaging the historical association of the Labour Party with the unions that lost their traditional privileges. In this sense, many critics and intellectuals of the time denounced that New Labour

[23] The tax credit system was a mechanism designed by the government to apply tax deductions to people and families who were entering the labour market (Annesley and Gamble, 2004: 153). It became a strategy to motivate inactive people to work.

represented a mere consolidation of the Thatcherite neoliberal measures. The government's pro-business position represented a clear U-turn in classical Labour policy, and a change of direction from old social democracy towards pure capitalism. As Robert Taylor suggests:

> [Tony Blair] believes that Britain under his leadership is turning into a Business Model of how an advanced post-industrial economy can meet the formidable challenges posed by the competitive forces of globalization and technological change. Blair's ambitious purpose is to advance a much more radical strategy of liberalization and deregulation of markets—financial, product as well as labour. It represents a further significant shift in the Labour Party's attitude towards the virtues of a more lightly supervised capitalism which is based primarily on the supposed neo-liberal virtues of the US model of the political economy. (2005: 185)

Nonetheless, and despite Blair's conservatism, he offered a middle-ground alternative to radical neoliberalism. Blair was still aware of the need to foment values such as social equality and social justice, then interpreted not as the Old Labour motto of redistribution of wealth but as the right and duty to work: social fairness thus became the communitarian duty of wealth creation, and the individual—as a member of society—had to contribute with his/her work to create national wealth. Therefore, full employment—rebranded as "opportunities for all" (Giddens, 2000)—turned into a preventive measure of poverty and social exclusion, and with this aim in mind, the government initiated a number of reforms that stimulated inactive working-age people to join the labour market, namely the National Minimum Wage, and the New Deal for the young (Coates, 2000a: 124-127).[24] All these measures, and the New Deal in particular, aimed to reduce public spending on social services, and, as the government had promised to do, to stick to the conservative tax and spend plans for the first two years in office (McKay and Rowlingson, 2008: 61). As Peter Dwyer states: "Central to this shift has been the requirement that citizens should become active agents in their own welfare by seeking paid work rather than relying on social benefits" (2008: 200).

[24] The National Minimum Wage was established at £3.60 in 1999 (Driver and Martell, 2006: 98). Additionally, the New Deal programme for the young was a system that motivated unemployed working-age people to move to the labour market with the warning of sanctions in public benefits if they declined a job offer: "The old 'passive' unconditional welfare system was to be replaced with a new 'active' welfare state in which social rights come with attendant responsibilities" (Dwyer, 2008: 208). With this measure, the government managed to employ up to 80% of the working population (McKay and Rowlingson, 2008: 61).

Many experts pointed out that Blair's legacy of his welfare reform broadly continued the Thatcherite philosophy. New Labour managed to activate the economy by promoting full employment and making less people dependent on social benefits, thus reducing public spending on social security (McKay and Rowlingson, 2008: 54). This seemed to be consistent with the conservative principles of "responsibility" and "hard work" (67), which suggested that the new conception of employment policies under Blair entailed a neoliberal marketisation of labour by giving priority to private enterprise, subordinating the trade unions and emphasising wealth creation over distribution:

> What is undoubtedly true, however, is that Blair's effect on Labour market reform and employment relations was to guarantee the long-term success of Margaret Thatcher's remarkable achievement in destroying the so-called post-war social settlement and replacing it with a more vibrant culture of business success. (Taylor, 2005: 205)

The perception that Blair's welfare reforms were in tune with the former Tory government provoked a generalised criticism among left-wing experts and British intellectuals who disapproved the government's commitment to stick to the previous conservative budget plans and promote privatisations and welfare-to-work programmes. Several intellectuals, who had earlier predicted a need to reform the welfare state, later reacted against Blair's conservative measures. Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques, Eric Hobsbawm, and Roy Hattersley, among many others, had defended the urgent need of the left to modernise and reinterpret the concept of the welfare state, yet, once Blair implemented his reforms in the social security system, these intellectuals reacted against what they considered to be a misunderstanding of their initial position. One of the key publications of the time was a one-off issue of the magazine *Marxism Today* in 1998, which represented the intellectual opposition to Blair's reforms and an attempt to claim that these intellectuals' early thesis was located to the left of Blair's politics (see chapter five, 5.2).

Similarly, novelists Sue Townsend and Jonathan Coe were among those representative fiction writers that illustrated and parodied Blair's legacy of public services and welfare in their respective novels *Number 10* (2002) and *The Closed Circle* (2004) (see chapter four, 4.2). Townsend was particularly inquisitive about Blair's approach to welfare not only in her novel but also in other public statements that

denounced a detriment in transport, social housing and social benefits, as well as growing privatisations, poor labour conditions and the deteriorated state of the working class. Coe, for his part, also depicted Blair's pro-business attitude and his anti-labour laws.

Despite these critical perceptions, the global spending on welfare was slightly higher if compared with the previous conservative era. Yet, analysts emphasised that this increment of public spending scarcely reverted in the wellbeing of citizens: the real spending on social benefits rose during the Blair years up until 2006, but considering inflation, the actual proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) devoted to social security had decreased.[25] Public spending was dedicated mainly to families with children, the poorest pensioners, the disabled and the unemployed, and still and all, poverty rates by the end of the Blair years were particularly high (McKay and Rowlingson, 2008: 69).

2.2.3.2 Constitutional Reform

Notwithstanding New Labour's promises on political radicalism, and, according to critics, the sometimes unfulfilled expectations persistent during the Blair era, there was one fundamental and historic reform under the Blair government: the constitutional reform that, in a frame of modernisation, was "inspired by notions of democracy, decentralization, accountability, community and co-operation" (Burch and Holliday, 2000: 80). The most relevant constitutional measures that were applied in the Blair years were, on the one hand, a celebrated decentralisation of power in territorial competence—with the Devolution to Scotland and Wales, and the New Localism—and on the other, the Parliamentary reform, with the modernisation of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The Blairite radicalism lay in New Labour's attempts to change such centenarian institutions and dismantle the roots and the inflexible power of the traditional parliamentary structure of Britain, thus provoking a fierce opposition on many fronts.

[25] "Spending on social security benefits rose from 1997 to 2006 by over 50% in cash terms, and by nearly one quarter (22.5%) after adjusting for inflation. The proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) spent on social security did, however, fall back slightly, from 11.9% to 11.4%" (McKay and Rowlingson, 2008: 54).

2.2.3.2.1 Devolution and the New Localism

> People do of course feel proud to be Scottish and Welsh but they feel British too. And that sense of being both Scottish and British, or Welsh and British, lies behind the completely legitimate desire to have more control over their own affairs. (Blair, 1996b: 269)

When Blair reached Number 10, he proceeded to fulfil the Devolution of power to Scotland and Wales. In 1997, referendums in both territories were arranged and despite important differences of participation, they together showed the citizens' approval to hold the first elections to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly in May 1999. The parallel process in Northern Ireland conveyed different results: as already mentioned, the devolution of powers to the Assembly of Northern Ireland took place in 1998 as a consequence of the Good Friday Agreement.

In practical terms, Devolution involved the establishment of a Scottish and Welsh executive both led by a First Minister. In Scotland, Devolution embraced legislative competences, fiscal policies, and other responsibilities in health, education, social services, transport, environment, and agriculture (Faucher-King and Le Galés, 2010: 66). The Welsh Assembly, however, although with an executive body, lacked legislative powers (Burch and Holliday, 2000: 83); the Westminster Parliament remained sovereign over defence, foreign policy, the national macroeconomic system, social security, employment and the constitution (Bogdanor, 1999: 204). Although this historic reform was widely acclaimed—especially among Labour MPs and nationalists—there were clear complications: first, Devolution in Scotland and Wales was asymmetrical, since powers were devolved at different degrees in both territories (Bradbury, 2007: 14), giving the overall impression that citizens were governed in unequal terms. Secondly, England did not have an independent assembly, causing controversy and debate around the unbalanced structure of power in British territory: this was known as the West Lothian Question.[26] The solution for the English problem was to eventually implement a decentralisation system in the English territory—the

[26] "Speaking during a 1977 House of Commons debate over devolution, the MP for the Scottish district of West Lothian—Tam Dalyell—asked how long English Members of Parliament (MPs) (and constituencies) would tolerate MPs from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland having a say over British political decisions when English MPs had much less say over affairs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland" (McCormick, 2007: 55).

New Localism—establishing eight autonomous areas, the so-called RDAs (Regional Development Agencies) in which local governments could satisfy and adapt to regional needs.[27] Analogously, a Mayor of London would be elected to lead the Greater London Authority (GLA) [28] and be in charge of "transport, economic development, the environment, planning, police, fire and culture" (Burch and Holliday, 2000: 84). However, despite New Labour's apparent attempts to decentralise political control, critics suggested that the government actually executed countermeasures that increased control and inspection over many different areas and institutions of devolved power. The New Labour government created a number of units in British territory—such as the Strategic Communications Unit, the Social Exclusion Unit, and the Performance and Innovation Unit—whose aim was to control and supervise government policies. It also appointed special ministers, such as the Minister of the Cabinet or the Minister of the Civil Service (Richards and Smith, 2001: 150), as well as other inspectors and coordinators (such as the Presiding Officer) who supervised that central policies were executed, and devolved Parliaments lay within their powers (Bogdanor, 1999: 205). This paradoxical attitude of the government was confusing and contradictory; it simultaneously executed centralising and decentralising measures which eventually put into question the real effectiveness of these reforms: "Labour's reform programme is replete with contradictions. […] It wishes to decentralize and disaggregate power whilst retaining, or increasing, central control" (Richards and Smith, 2001: 148). In this respect, some British journalists, such as Simon Jenkins and Anthony Barnett, criticised the ambivalent position of the government and argued that despite the New Labour reforms, Britain remained a centralised nation:

> Only in the United Kingdom has the political establishment remained largely immune from this devolutionist movement. After the Second World War the nation came to see itself as a unitary welfare state, politically monolithic and administratively homogeneous. Britain realized Henry James's claim that "all England is a suburb of London." (Jenkins, 2007: 307)

[27] The RDAs enjoyed modest powers, such as transport and the supervision of national policies in coordination with central government (Travers, 2005: 86-87).

[28] Labour MP Ken Livingstone announced his candidature for Mayor of London in 1999. His traditional leftist background and his rebellious attitude towards New Labour made Tony Blair disapprove him for the post and prevent him from standing (Rawnsley, 2001: 342-371). Livingstone finally run as an independent candidate and was elected Mayor of London in 2000. He was finally readmitted in the Labour Party in January 2004 winning the June 2004 election (*Independent*, 2004).

In Jenkins's view, real localism was the only effective way of guaranteeing democracy, as citizens would feel involved in their communities as well as more responsible for their elected leaders. Jenkins's defence of the importance of localism lay in the fact that "modern government, whatever its purpose, becomes more inefficient the more distant it is from its patron, the voter and taxpayer, and its consumer" (341-342). For many of these critical voices, decentralisation seemed to be a fake and contradictory process that actually caused interference to real autonomy.

Briefly, New Labour's efforts of decentralisation by institutionalising the Devolution of power to Scotland and Wales and setting the RDAs have been widely criticised for its lack of real effectiveness. However, global overview highlighted the historic impact of this reform, which modified the power structure and the governmental competences of England, Scotland and Wales for the first time in history.

2.2.3.2.2 Parliamentary Reform

There were two main historical demands for parliamentary reform: the amendment of the controversial electoral system in the House of Commons that benefited the two major political parties in Britain, and the contested undemocratic nature of the House of Lords that reproduced a millenary hereditary structure of representation in the upper chamber.

The New Labour government began a set of notable reforms that reversed the existent conditions of the democratic state: on the one hand, Blair instigated the reform of the electoral system in the House of Commons to ultimately achieve greater proportionality and governmental stability. The new voting system would be chosen among different proposals, such as the so-called Alternative Vote and the Proportional Representation, any one of which would substitute the ongoing First-Past-the-Post system.[29] No concrete agreement was eventually reached under Blair's premiership for,

[29]In the Alternative Vote system, "voters rank their preference between first and second choice and votes are then redistributed until one candidate has 50 per cent or more of the votes cast" (Richards and Smith, 2001: 160). As regards Proportional Representation, it is considered one of the fairest voting systems, since it ensures a proportional representation of all real votes in Parliament and integrates minor political forces that are normally under-represented. Both Tories and Labour have traditionally been reticent to Proportional Representation. As for First-Past-the-Post system is concerned, voters elect their candidates in their corresponding constituencies; the first candidate to win the highest number of constituencies wins the election, but it does not necessarily mean that those candidates and their parties have the proportional

as some writers pointed out, New Labour's electoral majority made the reform unnecessary (Pugh, 2011: 400). On the other hand, the House of Lords Act in 1999 aimed to reduce the size of the chamber by a half in 2001, lower the number of hereditary peers from 759 to 92, and maintain a majority of members "coming from indirect regional elections and a pool of life peers" (Summers, 2009; also see Flinders, 2004: 129). From historical perspective, whilst the Labour Party had always been very demanding with regards to parliamentary reform, Blair's promises were the less ambitious, and for many left-wing intellectuals, not radical enough; however, the reform became a remarkable historic feat for it was the only proposal that was actually implemented.

All in all, many experts considered Blair's reforms positive but deficient, and they warned against a potentially dwindled democracy. Theorists Will Hutton and Tony Judt, and journalists Simon Jenkins, Andrew Marr, Poly Toynbee and Hugo Young complained about New Labour's incomplete and disappointing reforms, and denounced the growing sense that democracy had weakened under Blair. The failure of the electoral reform in the Commons and the incomplete reform of the House of Lords prevented Parliament from becoming a fully representative body; additionally, the increased powers of Blair's executive masked through centralising reforms revealed a flawed democracy, "the decline of Parliament and its increasing subservience to the executive" (Cowley and Stuart, 2005: 20).

2.2.3.3 Economic Policies

> I think a market economy is in the public interest, but I do not think it equates with the public interest. And so I think that the means of intervention and control in the public interest should be there with us. But I think it is important that they are seen not as an attempt to abolish the market economy. (Blair, 1996b: 109)

New Labour's economic philosophy was one of the pillars upon which Blair's ideological foundation was based. For the Prime Minister, the Third Way stance on economy was a middle-ground alternative between the market economy of *laissez-faire*

majority of the votes. In this system, winning political parties are normally over-represented (Johnston et al., 2001).

and the state intervention of traditional social democracy, which was grounded on the Keynesian precepts of employment, redistribution of wealth, social security, welfare, public ownership and high taxation (Gamble and Kelly, 2001: 169; Driver and Martell, 2006: 57). However, some critics suggested that New Labour's economic programme was a mere continuation of the conservative neoliberal policies that gave "priority to price stability over full employment, and promote[d] the free movement of goods and capital" (Gamble and Kelly, 2001: 167), as New Labour's pro-business attitude endorsed market competition, tax reduction, and wealth creation over redistribution.

New Labour's halfway alternative between social justice and the free market did not signify a new ideological current within the Labour tradition. Constant modernisation processes in the party had previously broken with its traditional interventionist attitude, with the "tax and spend" tenet, and with "interest rates as a way of maintaining full employment" (Driver and Martell, 2006: 56). From the 1950s and 1960s, Hugh Gaitskell and Tony Crosland, representatives of the Revisionism of the left, argued that changes in social democracy were necessary to achieve social justice and equality. In the late 1980s, the party continued with reforms that accepted the global capitalist economy; for instance, under Kinnock the party "no longer supported the high spending" (Gamble and Kelly, 2001: 171) and looked at the private sector so as to supply state deficiencies. In the 1990s, Tony Blair concluded this long modernisation process when he changed Clause IV of the party constitution and committed himself to private enterprise, fiscal conservatism (tax cuts and control of public expenditure) and monetarism (Driver and Martell, 2006: 60).

The Treasury, led by Chancellor Gordon Brown and his team (with Ed Balls, Ed Miliband, Charlie Whelan and Geoffrey Robinson), had three main battlefronts in 1997. Their aims were to achieve macro-economic stability to avoid inflation, reach fiscal solidity by advocating less taxes and less spending, and improve social services and create employment by stimulating the private initiative. Their strategy was therefore to stick to the conservative austerity plans for the first two years of government so as to later provide a budget surplus on public services such as education, health and transport (Stephens, 2001: 186). As Philip Stephens suggests: "For those on the left, the break with Keynesian demand policies was New Labour's betrayal. For Brown, in his favourite phrase, it was prudence with a purpose" (2001: 188). Brown's philosophy was to create wealth and regulate the state budget deficit in order to subsequently invest savings in the public sector: "It pledged to honour the spending limits for the next two

years outlined in his last budget by Kenneth Clarke and thus to fund any fresh spending from savings identified within the envelope of those plans" (Moran and Alexander, 2000: 111).

To start, one of the first reforms that New Labour carried out was to achieve the Independence of the Bank of England. This operation allowed the Bank to set interest rates with independence of government's concerns, thus providing economic stability and reliability to the markets: "The symbolism of the change was all-important. Labour wished to demonstrate that low inflation would remain its primary objective" (Gamble and Kelly, 2001: 174). Brown transferred the monetary policy to the Bank, and it would be the Bank and a commission (the Monetary Policy Committee) which would have monetary control to set interest rates. The objective of the Committee was to keep "an average inflation rate of 2.4 per cent during the Blair government's first term of office, with inflation moving within the range of 1.8—3.2 per cent" (Lee, 2011: 412). With this measure, New Labour followed the conservative monetarist policy of non-interventionism: it was not the government, but the market itself that regulated financial policy. Additionally, Brown announced economic "prudence" as a way to achieve fiscal stability: "The policy advisory system in Whitehall has been focused on the proposition that fiscal policy must be both prudent and predictable in order to encourage the accumulation of new capital investment now deemed necessary to secure long-term growth" (Denzau and Roy, 2004: 31). Limits were established to control the government debt that would be ultimately devoted to public spending, so the government's aim was to minimise taxes and reduce public investment in health and education during the first two years of government. Broadly speaking, the austerity and the economic growth of these first years allowed Brown save extra money that was used to pay public debt and improve health, education and transport during the rest of the tenure (Driver and Martell, 2006: 75). Although they finally allocated £68 billion to public services in the last three years of the term, critics noticed that the annual average of spending was lower than the previous conservative expenditure (75).[30]

Finally, New Labour's most symbolic U-turn in economic policy was precisely to move away from the social democratic tradition and prioritise the private sector by promoting free market and competition. This was Tony Blair accepting the Reagan-

[30] During Margaret Thatcher's government, spending increased by 1.2 per cent per year; with John Major, spending reached 2.6 per cent per year, and with Tony Blair, the annual average of development fell to 1.3 per cent (Driver and Martell, 2006: 75).

Thatcher belief that "economic growth was dependent on encouraging greater private investment" (Denzau and Roy, 2004: 8), meaning that he used business not only to improve public services, but also to generate wealth:

> Tony Blair […] has made it clear that he would like to carry through an irreversible transformation of the British economy so that it can become one of the world's leading centres for successful private enterprise, wealth creation and investment in research and development and technological innovation. (Taylor, 2005: 184-185)

In Blair's view, the state ought not to make inroads against private activities for these were aimed to grow and create wealth. Blair's pro-business attitude led him to promote freer competition and limit state interventionism, which was showed, for instance, through the Competition White Paper that extended the so-called Private Finance Initiative (PFI), a measured that was "established under the Conservatives for investment in public services, particularly in schools, hospitals and transport" (Annesley and Gamble, 2004: 150). The government therefore allowed the private sector to fund public services "that otherwise would not have been economically and financially feasible" (Shaw, 2007: 83).

In conclusion, New Labour's legacy as economic policies are concerned was generally praised, although it generated sceptical opposition on the left. Some experts pointed out that the government's performance on economy allowed Britain to unexpectedly grow and increase its Gross Domestic Product an average of 4% up to 2004. Thanks to Brown's "prudence" during the first years, he could later improve public services, generate wealth and beat unemployment: "Brown could boast of monetary and fiscal stability, growth running at between 2 and 3 per cent, and a steep fall in unemployment to levels last seen in the 1970s" (Stephens, 2001: 187). Also, the government's neoliberal policies brought the private sector to the foreground, even though they eventually damaged public spending; especially during the New Labour years, business and private enterprise increased their financial activity (Driver and Martell, 2006: 77). On this point, analysts and left-wing intellectuals who complained that the government's new attitude betrayed the party's traditional commitment to social democracy joined in a special one-off issue of the magazine *Marxism Today* in 1998 to express their disappointment with the Labour government. Writers such as Stuart Hall, Eric Hobsbawm, Martin Jacques, Will Hutton, David Held, Gerald Holtham, and Anatole Kaletsky contributed with respective essays to deconstruct Blair's discourse

that neoliberalism and globalisation had become an irreversible socio-economic tendency, and they advocated for the rightful place that social democracy had, in their opinion, in contemporary societies.

2.3 TIMES OF TROUBLE: BLAIR'S SECOND TERM (2001—2005)

Several crises preceded the second general election of 2001. The Foot and Mouth Disease was one of the most relevant conflicts that would anticipate Blair's troubles during his second term in government, such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that eclipsed Blair's domestic agenda from 2001 to 2005.

The crisis of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) paved the way for the forthcoming general election. The livestock catastrophe started in a pig farm in Essex in February 2001 and quickly spread throughout the whole country within a few days. At first, the government failed to heed the incident, and its initial moderate reaction augmented the consequences; the virus quickly contaminated sheep, thus forcing the government to ban livestock movement and slaughtering infected animals (McConnell and Stark, 2002: 665). The extermination continued for a month: in the beginning, the farmers complained that the measures taken were slow and ineffective, and "in a second phase of the crisis from mid-March onwards, there was a pendulum swing towards 'overkill'," as there was also the suspicion that, in the perspective of the general election, the government took "excessive, pre-emptive, cull programmes" that aimed at eradicating the epidemic transmission (665). The crisis supposed the inevitable postponement of the general poll that was finally arranged on 7 June 2001 (665).

2.3.1 The 2001 General Election

When Tony Blair began preparing the second general election, he was disposed to continue with his modernisation project and the ambition that the Labour Party would win a second consecutive election for the first time in history. Opinion polls predicted that the Labour Party would get a majority in Parliament, but it was not guaranteed. Blair was aware that the New Labour delivery in public services during his first term

was deficient, so he promised to focus on these areas in his next tenure (Dolowitz, 2002: 126).

Although great efforts were devoted to winning the election, finding an interesting and innovative programme eventually became a challenge, as Blair's team did not really have a plan for the second term. As Peter Mandelson acknowledged, "our campaign as a whole turned out to be flat. The media, and the public, seemed to take only a perfunctory interest in the election" (Mandelson, 2010: 333). In the electoral manifesto, Blair ultimately announced a radical reform of public services—concretely in health and education—that included "a much closer relationship with the private sector" (Blair, 2010: 314). This caused "discontent on the left, and warnings from trade union leaders, who interpreted Alastair's rather clumsy briefings after the manifesto launch as suggesting that Tony wanted to 'privatise' the public services" (Mandelson, 2010: 332). Additionally, Blair promised to prioritise the law and order agenda, and improve science, technology and industry (Blair, 2010: 314). On economy, Tony Blair announced a rise in spending, and a referendum to join the European single currency (Geddes and Tonge, 2002: 7; Radice, 2010: 142). However, despite Blair's initial popularity and promises for his second term, citizens became distrustful with the government: "Single parents, students and the disabled felt 'betrayed and led down'" (Rawnsley, 2001: 489). Protests and a generalised disenchantment began to penetrate society; yet, the voter still prioritised promises on public services—the Labour manifesto—to reduction of taxes and the European question: the banners of the conservative campaign (Geddes and Tonge, 2002: 6).[31]

Moreover, tension between members of the New Labour government became evident during the electoral campaign (Radice, 2010: 143). Tony Blair and Gordon Brown began to lead in opposite directions, and pressure to maintain their popularity and win the election affected the whole party. Nevertheless, despite disadvantages and previous difficulties, on 7 June 2001 New Labour won a 167-seat majority, achieving a second consecutive victory in Parliament and an electoral feat in historical perspective: "Where all his predecessors failed, Tony Blair had secured the two full terms that had

[31] After John Major's defeat at the 1997 election, William Hague succeeded him as leader of the Conservative Party with the intention of modernising and unifying a divided party and making it electable again; that was Hague's "Fresh Start" campaign. At the 2001 general election, Hague led the electoral campaign with the right-wing slogan "Save the Pound," and the European integration as the keys of his manifesto, which could not beat Labour's concerns about health and education (Geddes, 2002: 144; also see Hayton, 2012: 139).

eluded Labour for 101 years. That ghost of repeated failure which had shadowed him throughout the first term was finally exorcised" (Rawnsley, 2001: 503).

Regardless of Blair's political weaknesses and British society's growing disenchantment with the government, why did New Labour win its second general election? "The answer lies in perceptions of the party's performance in government. Four years in government, by and large, confirmed to Middle England that New Labour was a safe vote, and the economy grew relatively strongly compared to other major democracies" (Pattie, 2004: 21). This victory was thus rooted in the economic achievements of Blair's first government. Data showed that economy, based on low unemployment and low inflation, was successful and allowed a growth in families' income, the improvement of living standards, and changes in public services. Additionally, "Labour has reinvented itself under successive leaders since the early 1980s as a catch-all party, overcoming the limitations of its shrinking base by appealing across regional divisions and class lines" (Norris, 2001: 566). The global perception of New Labour was positive and inspired the voter: the middle-class electorate liked New Labour after all.

2.3.2 *9/11* and Afterwards

> This mass terrorism is the new evil in our world today. It is perpetrated by fanatics who are utterly indifferent to the sanctity of human life and we, the democracies of this world, are going to have to come together to fight it together and eradicate this evil completely from our world. (Blair in White and Wintour, 2001: 15)

In the morning of 11 September 2001, Tony Blair was preparing a speech to be delivered at the Trade Union Conference (TUC) in Brighton, a decisive event taking into account the dubious relationship of New Labour with the trade unions since he was in office. In the early afternoon when he was still working on his speech, his team watched some TV images of a plane crashing into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York. When the second plane collided against the South Tower everybody realised it was not a chance accident, but an attack (O'Carroll, 2011). They knew they were living a historical moment:

> We didn't watch the TV that long, but long enough for TB to reach the judgment about just how massive an event this was in its impact and implications. It's possible we were talking about thousands dead. We would also have to make immediate judgments about buildings and institutions to protect here. (Campbell, 2008: 559-560)

Blair stopped his speech draft, decided to cancel the appointment with the TUC and went back to London where he was informed by the British Intelligence services—the M15, M16 and the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC)—[32] that the terrorist organisation al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden were responsible for the attacks (Seldon, 2005: 487). Blair's main concern was that America would take a unilateral and excessive military action in Afghanistan, the headquarters of al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime (Dyson, 2009: 71-72). In his intention to influence Bush's decisions and ensure that the President's plan was "judicious, well-targeted, and multilateral" Blair wrote an advising letter to Bush recommending him to start by giving the Taliban an ultimatum (72-73). At this point, it became evident that a prospective conflict in Afghanistan would take place. The *war on terror* had to be, for Blair, a world battle against terrorism so he insisted on the urgent need to build support from the UN and join NATO forces for an intervention in the territory. The aim was therefore to change regime and eliminate the Taliban government that guaranteed protection to al-Qaeda; for Blair, international support was essential: "Blair's priority now was to shore up the international coalition he believed essential in support of the coming war" (Seldon, 2005: 494).

In this context, Blair prepared encounters with many European and world leaders—Berlusconi, Schröder, Chirac, and President of Pakistan Musharraf, among others—in order to determine their position and their willingness to start a coalition war. Blair forged this way his role in the American war against terrorism and became a diplomat who made huge efforts to persuade other world leaders to join America and Britain in their crusade. However, Blair's persistence against al-Qaeda was not based on a real threat to Britain but on a moral commitment against terrorism: "It was his most definitive statement of the case of moral imperialism when confronted by global terror"

[32] British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) is a structure that aims to procure state security through several agencies: the MI5 and MI6, responsible for domestic and foreign affairs respectively. They are led by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which coordinates the intelligence agencies and is in charge of advising the cabinet in terms of national security (Thomas, 2009: 2).

(Rawnsley, 2010: 43). As Blair showed in his other foreign interventions, his moral conviction was a driving force for getting into war; his *ethical dimension* and his religious Christian beliefs led him enter the war in the name of justice and freedom:

> The messianic Blair was largely concealed in the first term behind the cautious, popularity-hoarding dimension of his personality. It was in his second term that the conviction-driven Blair would be thrust to the foreground, transforming how the world looked on him and how he looked on the world. (45)

9/11 made Blair change plans for his second term. While his manifesto sought to focus on domestic issues such as the improvement of public services, the war actually dominated the rest of Blair's second period in office (Kavanagh, 2005: 3). His commitment to fight terrorism "shoulder to shoulder" with the United States intensified the "special relationship" between these two countries to the point of devoting the British government's time, efforts and budget to foreign affairs, thus setting domestic issues aside. Blair's determination to protect America's interests was ultimately aimed to guarantee Britain a strategic international position (Dyson, 2009: 75), and in this pursuit, Blair's always-sentimental discourse emphasised British solidarity with the American people: "My concern throughout was to make sure America felt embrace and supported, felt a real arm of solidarity stretched out towards them" (Blair, 2010: 353).

Left-wing analysts often condemned Blair's unconditional support for the republican President. The British intellectual and cultural spheres generally opposed Blair's conduct by representing a ridiculing image of a politician who seemed obsessed with working at the right hand side of President Bush. Many artists of the time also contributed to parody this view in their productions, such was the case of rock bands *Radiohead*, *Pet Shop Boys*, and *Muse*, and political cartoonists such as Steve Bell, Martin Rowson and Chris Riddell, all of whom tried to denounce Blair's imperialist ambitions of leading world politics by embracing American interests.

2.3.3 Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003)

> This is not a battle between the United States of America and terrorism but between the free and democratic world and terrorism. We, therefore, here in Britain stand shoulder to shoulder with our American friends in this hour of tragedy, and we, like them, will not rest until this evil is driven from our world. (Blair in BBC, 2001)

In October 2001, the United States began the war in Afghanistan even though the military operation and the international support were still in germinal stages. As previously shown, Blair enrolled in a diplomatic task to favour the cause, for he considered the war a moral quest: "I thought it essential that the battle we were about to embark upon was not simply a war to punish. It had to liberate" (Blair, 2010: 356).

The ground war was called "Operation Enduring Freedom" and started on 7 October 2001 despite protests and "mounting public concerns in Britain about the potential for a humanitarian crisis, and [to] growing fears that it might increase the risk of terrorist attacks" (Kettell, 2006: 56). Blair was impatient to do a quick intervention with a rapid regime change so as to minimise casualties and avoid criticism. The Northern Alliance focused mainly on key Taliban objectives, such as the capital Kabul that fell on 13 November 2001, thus provoking the Taliban overthrow (Hill, 2005: 393). When the war ended, international forces remained in the territory so as to "ensure that Afghanistan did not return to ungoverned space within which terrorist training and preparation could flourish" (Blair, 2010: 361). The British people and the media soon became hostile towards the intervention by warning against the humanitarian effects of the military action and Bush's announcement that Afghanistan was simply the first step to fight terrorism (Seldon, 2005: 504). At this point, the EU began to be distrustful of the methods and the long-term aims of the war. The Muslim world, for its part, also became suspicious and self-protective with regards to the attack; although Blair had insisted that this war would not be against Muslims (Campbell, 2008: 570), his credibility, and that of other leaders, was put into question:

> Blair's sense of conviction and moral certainty, guided by underlying religious belief, made any other outcome unlikely. He has subsequently been criticized for this, on the grounds that it encouraged a sloganeering crusade which would lead to the very kind of stereotyping of Muslims which he deplored. (Hill, 2005: 389)

Afghanistan became Britain and America's first step to beat any regime that would be complicit with al-Qaeda's acts of aggression, being Iraq the next target in the *war on terror*:

> The moral case against war has a moral answer: it is the moral case for removing Saddam. It is not the reason we act. That must be according to the United Nations mandate on weapons of mass destruction. But it is the reason, frankly, why if we do have to act, we should do so with a clear conscience. (Blair, 2010: 425)

Shortly after 9/11, the American intelligent services established a connection between the terrorist attacks and Saddam Hussein's regime: "Within twenty-four hours of 9/11, the President himself was exhorting counter-terrorism officials to drag up 'any shred' of evidence that might be used to link Saddam to the attacks" (Kettell, 2006: 50).[33] The conflict in Afghanistan thus triggered the war in Iraq, a longed US target: "Geoff [Hoon] said Rumsfeld had been looking for reasons to hit Iraq. They definitely wanted regime change and that was the channel of advice that Bush had been getting since the election" (Campbell, 2008: 567).[34] Blair, for his part, had also longed to get rid of Saddam and his continual violations of UN resolutions, but until 9/11 the invasion did not become a priority for him. Blair was completely convinced that "removing Saddam was therefore better for Iraq than keeping him" (Blair, 2010: 380), and yet, his support for the US established certain conditions: the intervention had to be in coordination with the UN (445).

In order to achieve the greatest support within and outside Britain, Blair's government elaborated a dossier that justified the urgency for action, as they believed that Iraq possessed WMD and there seemed to exist a connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, motives that would make the invasion a legal offensive if they were to be true (Phythian, 2007: 136). Such dossier based its information on the British intelligence forces, which were reticent to publish the dossier for they had previously

[33] Since the 1980s, Western nations were suspicious of Saddam Hussein's capability to create WMD (nuclear, chemical and biological weapons), and his constant attacks on the Iraqi people as well as other surrounding countries led the UN to watch Iraq closely. Saddam's refusal to cooperate and allow inspectors to enter the country, together with his final invasion of Kuwait in 1990, provoked the First Gulf War, in which a UN coalition led by the United States—with George W. Bush senior as President—attacked Iraq to achieve the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. In 1998, Operation Desert Fox headed by the US and the UK again tried to respond to Saddam's violations of UN resolutions and prevent the dictator from making and using weapons of mass destruction (Hill, 2005: 396).

[34] Geoff Hoon was Secretary of Defence at that moment; concurrently, Donald Rumsfeld was Secretary of Defence from 2001 to 2006 working for President George W. Bush.

established that there was no evidence of "practical co-operation" between al-Qaeda and Iraq, and that evaluations of Iraq's power to make WMD were also negative (Kettell, 2006: 57). The working on the dossier became one of the most controversial and debated issues around the Iraq war during the coming years. The initial draft elaborated by the JIC did not contemplate a real imminent threat by Saddam, and this was the reason why some members of the government led by Alastair Campbell insisted that the dossier required modifications to increase a potential threat:

> Since the available intelligence was not thought to be an adequate reflection of the real situation, the exaggeration of this material was now felt to be both legitimate and a necessary course of action to take. Needless to say, the task of persuading domestic and international opinion as to the validity of this viewpoint, and hence of the need for more forceful measures, would require something more than assertions of faith and speculation. (62)

The dossier affair came to light in May 2003 when BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan denounced that the government had modified intelligence information affirming that Iraq had WMD for immediate use—the well-known "forty-five minutes" threat (Isikoff and Corn, 2007: 294). In sight that the Prime Minister was going to be questioned about the issue, the government—with Alastair Campbell in the lead—leaked that Defence intelligence expert Dr David Kelly had admitted being Gilligan's source; in spite of the government's promises of anonymity, Kelly's name was publicly involved in the affair, consequently motivating his suicide (Gilligan, 2010): "Kelly disappeared after going for a walk near his home in Oxfordshire. His wife raised the alarm, and a few hours later his body was found. He had committed suicide" (Mandelson, 2010: 362). The whole question took place in a very suspicious and dubious context of government conspiracy, and the issue raised was that the government was somehow responsible for Kelly's suicide (362). Although the consequent investigation—the so-called Hutton Enquiry—concluded that the government was found not guilty of misconduct,[35] the Blair government remained under suspicion, and the shadow of dubious wrongdoing and conspiracy still surrounded the subject: "The impression had taken hold that even if Gilligan had been wrong in his facts, in some

[35] The Hutton Enquiry was the investigation in charge of searching into the causes of Dr David Kelly's suicide. The investigation concluded that the Blair government was not responsible for Kelly's death, despite the spread legend that Kelly had been murdered because of his information leaks to journalists.

way Tony had manipulated the nation into a war it shouldn't, or needn't, have fought" (381). In fact, public opinion doubted the reliability of the Hutton Report and believed more in the BBC's innocence than in the government's: "Opinion polls published in Hutton's wake indicated that most of the public thought the report was a whitewash and that the judge was wrong to clear Downing Street of 'sexing-up' the dossier. Voters still invested far more trust in the BBC than they did in the Government" (Rawnsley, 2010: 240). This incident eventually affected the credibility of both the case for war and Blair's reputation (Hill, 2005: 398).

At the international scale, Blair devoted all his energies to achieving the UN approval that granted legitimacy for the invasion, and he took great pains to get the nine votes he needed for a favourable resolution. However, in March 2003 France announced they would veto the resolution on the basis that inspectors had not found WMD:

> He [Dr Hans Blix, head of UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission] said they had been to some of the places named in the dossier, and it could be they had been sanitized, but they found nothing. The indication was that come February 14 he would be saying they had not found WMD but there was no real cooperation. (Campbell, 2008: 663-664)

In addition, gaining domestic support for the war was another of Blair's most challenging tests. First, opinion polls showed that a majority of the British people believed "there was no evidence to justify a military attack on Iraq" (Dyson, 2009: 99), which led many British citizens to confront the government's involvement in the war in a historic demonstration in the streets of London in February 2003 (BBC, 2003a). Secondly, Blair's intentions to gather support included convincing his cabinet and the British Parliament that going to war was the right decision: "We went round the Cabinet one by one to assess who would support him without a second resolution. We could probably just about get to a majority but it would be difficult" (Campbell, 2008: 659-660). Yet, a back-bench rebellion of Labour MPs and the straightforward confrontation of some dissent politicians such as Clare Short and Robin Cook fiercely opposed the war on the basis that it was illegal and broke international law (Tempest, 2003). Still and all, despite the UN denial, the people's opposition, and internal insurrections, Blair was determined to join America in the war not only because it was a manner of influencing Bush's decisions, but also because of "Iraq's historical record of aggression

and human rights violations" and because Blair believed that Saddam was capable of procuring WMD (O'Driscoll, 2008: 48).

Military action started on 20 March 2003, and lasted until December 2003 when Saddam Hussein was captured by the American forces. This became a symbolic conclusion for the war, but chaos remained throughout the whole territory. Suicide bomb attacks, insecurity, segregation and sectarianism, and a Shia/Sunni civil war became the focus of international criticism since then. For the New Labour government, the war—that was targeted at removing Saddam—had achieved its aims, but "despite the early military successes and the rapid toppling of Saddam, the political price was enormous" (Mandelson, 2010: 360). The Iraq war became a historical landmark in Blair's premiership. General disapproval of the war among British people, international opinion, and the UN made Blair's second term the turning point of his—until then—successful tenure. Those great expectations put on New Labour back in 1997 were frustrated in 2003 with Iraq as the symbol of Blair's personal and political downfall. His moral conviction that Saddam had WMD and his ambition to keep a special relationship with the US cost Blair an overwhelming parliamentary opposition, his so much appreciated popularity in the streets, and last but not least, two polemic wars: Afghanistan and Iraq. As Andrew Rawnsley put it: "Idealism mixed with realpolitik, terror stirred with vanity, this was the cocktail of impulses that drew Tony Blair down the road to war" (2010: 92).

In addition, the intellectual opposition to the war was devastating. Journalists saturated newspaper publications with columns of denunciation against the war, theorists and critics openly reacted against Blair's decisions in the media and different academic publications, writers illustrated their political disenchantment in novels, and different analysts joined signature campaigns and petitions against the invasion. Since the amount of intellectual production around Iraq is unreachable, this dissertation comprehends a collection of the most significant reactions to the war. Among the writers that novelised Iraq were Ian McEwan with his novel *Saturday* (2005), Jonathan Coe with *The Closed Circle* (2004), Sue Townsend with *Adrian Mole and the Weapons of Mass Destruction* (2004), and John Harris with *The Ghost* (2007), being the latter the inspiration for the film *The Ghost Writer* (2010) directed by Roman Polanski (see chapter four—4.2—and chapter six—6.2). Moreover, Harold Pinter's Nobel Prize lecture revealed the shames of Western imperialism and denounced the role that Blair's Britain had in America's wars; this together with large signature campaigns such as the

one led by the website *openDemocracy* in 2003 contributed to the intellectual and cultural opposition to the war (see 4.2). Political playwrights such as Alistair Beaton and David Hare, theorists and critics such as David Marquand, Tony Judt, Simon Jenkins, Poly Toynbee, and Hugo Young, dissident Labour MPs such as Roy Hattersley and George Galloway, and other cultural personalities will consequently be analysed in following chapters of this dissertation as key intellectual and cultural figures against the war (see chapter five, 5.2, and chapter six, 6.2).

2.3.4 Domestic Policy (2001—2005)

> It is easy to look back on the early years of Iraq and think they were dominated by that event alone. In reality, it was precisely during this time when the domestic agenda moved forward most radically and most satisfactorily. (Blair, 2010: 480)

Back in 2001, Blair had promised a radical reform of public services, but the war in Iraq overshadowed his domestic agenda: "There is no doubt that the steady drain of time and political capital to international affairs, which began after 9/11 and greatly increased with the war in Iraq, left his domestic agenda in disarray" (Seldon, 2005: 512). Although Blair had previously instigated modest reforms in the public services during his first term, he was somehow aware of the need to develop and implement further reforms in health and education during his second term, the period when Blair's policies in these areas would be symbolic.

2.3.4.1 Education Reforms

> Ask me my three main priorities for government, and I tell you: education, education and education. (Blair in Richards, 2004: 165)

When Tony Blair became leader of the Labour Party, he announced that education would be a priority in his government. His idea was to improve the flaws of a complicated education system, as well as the students' performance at primary and secondary levels: "When New Labour came to power secondary education was crying out for reform" (Smithers, 2001: 415), so New Labour took great pains to start

important changes in the whole system. As Susan Martin and Yolande Muschamp suggest, "a radical programme of reform of education institutions had started before the election of 1997 but was adopted and became the dominating characteristic of Labour's education policy during the three terms of Tony Blair's government" (2008: 91).

First of all, the government aimed to improve learning standards in primary and secondary education and reverse students' low performance through the publication of the White Paper *Excellence in Schools* (1997). This document conveyed an analysis of the current state of education and propounded several measures to solve its needs. With that purpose, the government implemented the so-called Literacy and Numeracy programmes that targeted students' deficiencies in English and Math by reducing the National Curriculum and devoting extra schooling hours to the basic subjects: "In order to allow sufficient time for the literacy and numeracy programmes, the statutory curriculum for primary schools was reduced to a core of English, maths, science, information technology—and swimming" (Smithers, 2001: 414). Secondly, the government introduced a new system of assessment and evaluation of both students and teachers in order to improve their working standards. New official tests were introduced at different levels of the schooling life; in addition to the existent tests at seven, eleven and fourteen, Blair introduced more testing in primary and secondary education (Berliner, 2003: 2). Moreover, the government aimed to control teachers' performance and increase their motivation so as to ultimately improve education quality. This was achieved through a reward system that compensated good teachers with extra payments and removed incompetent teachers (Smithers, 2001: 417). The "failing schools," those that did not pass inspection, were closed down and reopened as "Fresh Start Schools" with a new board school and private investment and/or management (Araújo, 2009: 600-601). Opponents of these reforms suggested that the marketisation of the teaching profession risked making teachers' performance a profitable product, thus diminishing the social value of education.

Finally, the government also considered the diversification of education a necessary measure to improve standards, reason why they expanded school types and removed the Old Labour philosophy of comprehensive education: "New Labour now promised to preside over an education system which offered a meritocratic hierarchy of institutions," such as independent schools, grammar schools, foundation schools,

comprehensive schools, secondary modern schools, Fresh Start schools in Education Action Zones (EAZs), and Beacon Schools (McCaig, 2001: 193).[36] Parents had then the opportunity to choose the school they wanted for their children in terms of efficiency and school performance (Shaw, 2007: 72).

During Blair's second term, the most characteristic reform of New Labour conveyed the introduction of tuition fees in the previously free Higher Education. This reform became symbolic in Labour's education policies as it introduced the government's new approach of going private. The proposal included a loan system that allowed students to pay back their university costs and a grant system that exempted low-income families from paying fees (Driver and Martell, 2006: 131). This reform became a landmark in Labour's education trajectory, as the government dared to move further than previous conservative governments: "New Labour's stance on the introduction of tuition fees was radical not just in the context of a break with old Labour, but also in its willingness to tackle an issue which successive Conservative governments had feared" (Stedward, 2000: 178).

In general terms and according to experts, Blair's legacy in education could be summarised in different achievements and failures. On the one hand, there was a significant progress in students' performance, and Blair's educational policy of "zero tolerance of failure" had successful effects in pupils' results (Sammons, 2010: 16-20). Considering the government's targets for 2002 in English (80% of students reaching Level 4) and Math (75% of students reaching Level 4), the result was that by 2000 75% of them had achieved Level 4 in English and 72% in Math (Smithers, 2001: 412). For Stephen Driver and Luke Martell, New Labour's intervention in teaching assessment, and the reforms applied to the National Curriculum achieved the targets set (Driver and Martell, 2006: 124). On the other hand, criticism focused on the continuation of conservative policies under the Labour government, meaning that Labour increased the capacity of the private sector, enlarged centralising inspection (McCaig, 2001: 200), and reduced public spending on education: after the first two years during which the government maintained the conservative budget, and despite a later extra injection of

[36] Education Action Zones (EAZs) were areas with poor examination results, high unemployment, and a high rate of failing schools that needed state economic support so as to improve schooling standards (McCaig, 2001: 196). Beacon Schools were centres of excellence that would function as a model for other schools. The whole education system integrated a competitive market ideology that detached the egalitarian values that Old Labour defended (193-196).

£19 billion, it would not "raise the proportion of GDP spent on education above that of the Conservatives in their final term" (Stedward, 2000: 173).

2.3.4.2 Health Reforms

On health, New Labour also reproduced the Thatcherite legacy and the conservative idiosyncrasy that characterised Labour's performance in public services. Labour's recent interest in the private sector symbolised a radical change within the Old Labour tradition, since the Blair government believed that the private sector could contribute to more efficient and effective management of public services:

> Private Finance Initiative [was] created by the Conservatives in 1990 and extended by New Labour. This uses private capital to build "public" hospitals, with the NHS paying back the capital investment by private consortia in the form of annual "revenue" payments over thirty years or more. This policy is mostly about removing capital investment from government accounts, to reduce the "public sector borrowing requirement;" and is certainly not designed with the specific needs of the health sector in mind. (Paton, 2006: 80)

When New Labour began the health service reform, the government's goal was to improve health standards and transform the NHS. At that point, the most serious problems were underfunding, long waiting lists, poor performance of hospitals, high rate of cancer deaths, unequal redistribution of resources, difference in life expectancy between social classes and ethnic groups, and infant mortality (Glennerster, 2005: 285-293). Despite a shortage in financing during the first two years in office, the government announced an extra injection to "match average EU spending on health by 2006" (Driver and Martell, 2006: 122); yet, notwithstanding the extra spending on health—and as happened with education—the average investment did not exceed the previous conservative budget:

> In line with its election promise health service funding was held to the very tight limits the previous Conservative government had set. Some small respite was given in the early Brown budgets but the rate of real growth in health spending was held well below that of earlier years in the decade. (Glennerster, 2001: 399)

Additionally, a special emphasis was given to improve health rates not only in the National Health Service, but also in the most deprived areas that had urgent economic

needs. On the one hand, the Health Action Zones (HAZs) constituted poor areas that were identified as such in order to receive greater public investment and thus improve health rates (Annesley, 2001: 212). On the other hand, Foundation Hospitals, constituted with the aim to decentralise the NHS, were provided with more autonomy to raise funds from the private sector. The government also introduced a consumer choice system that allowed patients to choose the hospital they wanted to be treated in—based on standards of performance—so as to ultimately force competition and improve their services (Glennerster, 2005: 287-288).

As a consequence of Blair's reforms, critics denounced the growing marketisation process in the health system and the government's continuity with the previous conservative policies addressed to both the centralisation of inspection and the privatisation of hospitals. First of all, New Labour's efforts to increase control on the health system led to the creation of certain institutions—such as the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the Commission for Health Improvement—that aimed not only to inspect efficiency and quality of standards, but mainly to guarantee national control of health services (Wood, 2000: 199).[37] Broadly speaking, many of these institutions established a "star rating" system that rewarded the best hospitals with autonomy and economic incentives (Paton, 2008: 21-22). As privatisations were concerned, experts and critics pointed out that Labour's defence of privatisation in public services continued the previous conservative era and extended the so-called Private Finance Initiative (PFI) in order to minimise public spending:

> PFI was introduced by the Conservatives in November 1992 to transfer the financing of public investment from the state to the public sector, in an attempt to lower the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement. (Annesley, 2001: 212)

However, other experts who analysed New Labour's health reforms observed contrary results that eventually indicated an increment in public spending on the NHS—even to the point of reaching the European average—and considered that the quality of inpatient treatment gradually improved during the Blair years (Wood, 2000: 202;

[37] Decentralisation of the National Health Service had already begun with the Devolution of power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which allowed these territories to establish control of their own health centres. The government also gave more independence to hospitals (autonomous management and economic independence) in exchange for higher results. However, measures to increase control and inspection from national commissions put to question the ambiguous (de)centralisation process in the health service under New Labour.

Glennerster, 2005: 286). Despite criticism that highlighted a disappointing underfunding of the health system and the growing privatising tendency, New Labour managed to improve health rates and efficiency and quality in the system. The greatest objection of left-wing critics was that in order to achieve better standards, New Labour favoured private investment and a business-style philosophy that promoted competition and market-like incentives. Author Sue Townsend, in her already mentioned novel *Number 10* (2002), developed a detailed satirical picture of the state of public services during the Blair years. She was a critical voice who, among many other intellectuals, denounced the detriment of the health service and the development of privatisations that negatively affected the lives of the common citizen.

2.4 COLLAPSE OF AUTHORITY (2005—2007)

Prior to the 2005 general election, the government's reputation was tarnished by the controversial wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and by the Thatcherite-inspired approach to public services. Opposition to the government not only came from the British people, the international community and left-wing intellectuals who angrily opposed Blair's U-turn in Labour policies, resistance also came from Blair's own backbenches.

Discontent within the Labour Party had already begun with some of Blair's "radical" measures. The two first backbench rebellions took place apropos of the Iraq war and the NHS reforms, which raised a significant majority of the Labour Party against the Prime Minister (BBC, 2003b; BBC, 2003c). As previously explained, Robin Cook and Clare Short were two relevant MPs that publicly opposed the war finally resigning in 2003 (BBC, 2003d). In January 2004, a third internal rebellion opposed Blair's proposal for the Higher Education reform thus resisting the introduction of top-up university fees (BBC, 2004). The marketisation of education and its now non-redistributive approach became another of Blair's obsessions, and another front to justify his decisions as inevitable. These rebellions, which became more common by the end of the second term, represented the opposition of some frustrated Labour MPs who did not agree with the direction New Labour was taking. Among the dissident parliamentarians, Roy Hattersley, one of the intellectual members of the party who had contributed to the revisionist ideological debate a decade before, became an active member against the policies of the Prime Minister, and together with other controversial

politicians such as George Galloway, initiated political campaigns to denounce what they considered to be Blair's injustices and his abandonment of the principles of social democracy. As will be analysed in the following chapters of this dissertation, Hattersley publicly opposed his own government in journals and newspapers such as *The New Statesman* and *The Guardian*, and Galloway finally orchestrated the creation of a documentary film in which he would disclose Blair's shames.

Apart from independent Labour MPs that expressed their opposition to the Blair reforms, these rebellions similarly proliferated within the inside of the Brownite team that had long wished to succeed Blair in power, and that constantly disrupted Blair's proposals (Seldon, 2005: 648).

2.4.1 Psychological Flaws: TB/GB

The frustrated relationship between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown began in the well-known *Granita* deal back in 1994 when Blair promised Brown to delegate power sometime during the second term. Blair's reluctance to leave Downing Street shortly after the 2001 election initiated a long period of continual confrontations between Blair and Brown that was intensified throughout Blair's second and third terms until he finally resigned in 2007 (Campbell, 2010: 346-408). Their relationship gradually grew stale, and Brown became increasingly desperate and disturbed by the delay of his appointment as Prime Minister. In this context, and according to an Andrew Rawnsley column in *The Observer* in 1998, Blair had described Brown's difficult personality and his controversial temper reactions as "psychological flaws" (Rawnsley, 1998: 25), something that "had an immediate impact on relations between the two men. Brown regarded the remarks as a declaration of war by the Blair camp" (Watt, 2011).

Blair, for his part, did not believe that Brown would successfully implement the New Labour project, reason why he decided to delay the time for his departure once and again: "I didn't really believe Gordon would carry on the agenda. […] It would not exactly be Old Labour, but it wouldn't be authentic New Labour either" (Blair, 2010: 508). This made Brown despise Blair, oppose his reforms and insist on delegation:

> Ultimately, Gordon had felt entitled to make his move because Tony had not kept to his side of that bargain. Yet Gordon had not kept his side of the deal either. I did not feel he was right to have demanded the deal in the first place, to have kept pressing Tony for a departure date after his re-election in 2005, but to have refused

> to cooperate or work with him in office, and finally to have forced him out, was in my view unforgivable. (Mandelson, 2010: 427)

Blair and Brown's incompatibility of characters arouse tension in the government, thus disrupting policy-making when they refused to collaborate with each other. Their disagreement was often attached to differences in ideological beliefs and their distant concept of what New Labour was meant to be. Brown was always considered the left-wing architect of New Labour and often opposed Blair's modernising reforms in education, health and welfare (Campbell, 2010: 384-385). However, some experts have pointed out that despite Brown's ideological differences with Blair, this conflict was rooted in Brown's exasperation against his boss, who had usurped the post that was destined for himself: "What came to divide the two men was less a struggle over *policy* than a struggle for *power*" (Seldon, 2005: 667). It was not just a dispute to implement particular policies, but rather a dispute for power, for how to lead government and how to control and prioritise government decisions.

This troubled relationship was often commented and satirised by the media, not only by political analysts that described the intricacies of power, but mainly by journalists who found this personal conflict a good story to caricature. Although there exists a great diversity of materials that deal with the TB/GB war, I have included in this dissertation some relevant samples that portrayed this battle for power. Stephen Frears's film *The Deal* (2003) will depict the origins of their special relationship: the *Granita* deal, the germs of Brown's jealousy, and Blair's growing ambitions and strategising to become Prime Minister. Also, cartoonist Steve Bell will also be a significant figure that systematically illustrated the protagonists' rivalries from the 2005 general election until 2007 when Brown eventually succeeded as Prime Minister (see chapter six, 6.3).

2.4.2 The 2005 General Election

Blair's unresolved conflict in Iraq, his obsession with the idea of New Labour and his anxiety to conclude his project led him to stand for a third general election in 2005.[38] This time, Blair had many fronts against him: his increased unpopularity, the opposition of the media, internal conflicts with Gordon Brown, the tedium of a well-known government, and the citizen's widespread disenchantment complicated a third consecutive victory in the polls (Dorling and Thomas, 2011: 55; Seldon, 2008: 338). However, and despite Blair's handicaps, he won his third historic election on 4 May 2005: "He led Labour to landslide victories twice and was the party's first leader to win three consecutive general elections" (Casey, 2009: 3). His triumph became a celebrated feat, but his popularity and his loyal electorate had meaningfully decreased: "The 2005 general election returned 356 Labour members, generating a solid 66-seat parliamentary majority for the Labour government, although based on a far lower share of the vote" (Norris, 2005: 44). By 2005, Blair had become a different kind of politician, he was not the young and acclaimed leader that he was in 1997, but a questioned leader stigmatised by the war, the left of his own party, and an important sector of the British electorate that had "made Blair a hate figure" (Jones, 2011).

In this regard, why did Blair win his third and last election? Experts emphasised that the social class spectrum and the traditional political loyalties had changed in the course of the past decade: middle-class voters had chosen the party of the centre and were detached from left and right extremes. Also, historical achievements such as the Good Friday Agreement, and the transformation and modernisation of the Labour Party made New Labour more attractive, this together with a considered positive economic performance and his reforms in health and education favoured Blair's triumph (Norris, 2005: 56-9). All in all, the balance, for many, was positive, and despite the fiasco of the Iraq war, New Labour seemed to be ready to remain in government.

[38] Blair's opponent in 2005 was the conservative politician Michael Howard, who became leader of the Conservative Party in 2003 after succeeding Ian Duncan Smith (2001—2003). Howard put immigration at the heart of the electoral campaign "with a personal pledge to restrict the number of people coming into Britain" (*Telegraph*, 2005) thus attacking Labour for "uncontrolled immigration" (Seldon and Snowdon, 2005: 146). Other campaign themes in the conservative manifesto were "cleaner hospitals, school discipline, and more police" (146).

2.4.3 Last Reforms of the Blairite Period

> I thought that how much of New Labour survived depended on how much I could get done before I left. (Blair, 2010: 605)

Blair's last two years in government were devoted to finishing his New Labour agenda that was primarily focused on public services; however, his reputation contaminated by the troubled relationship with Gordon Brown, the uncomforting opposition of his own party, regular reshuffles and constant pressure to announce his departure implied political instability in the government. After the general election, Blair could envisage his possible departure sometime during his third term, and before making this happen, Blair ensured that his project reached an end; remaining in power was the only way of tiding up his New Labour agenda: "There would be no voluntary departure unless it was clear the reform programme was going to be continued" (Blair, 2010: 574).

Blair's political programme for his third term focused on law and order and immigration, but mostly on developing his second term reforms on public services: improving the public sector choice, rising investment in schools and hospitals, and improving waiting lists in the NHS (Happold, 2005). On education, Blair provided more autonomy and private funding to schools, but criticism within the party—such was the case of Neil Kinnock, who had unconditionally supported Blair in 1997—warned that Blair's reforms would create a selective and unequal system (Beckett, 2006: 34-35). To that, Blair responded, "equity could not and should never be at the expense of excellence" (Blair, 2010: 578). On pensions, Blair aimed to increase the lowest pensions, but constant battles between Number 10—the Blairites—and the Treasury—the Brownites—made very difficult to achieve a significant raise in pensions (Seldon, 2008: 401-404).

Blair's attempts to implement his reforms and control his programme entailed getting rid of the nonconformists that opposed his proposals, thus replacing the dissenting sectors with those who ensured Blair's reforming project. Therefore, constant reshuffles during his last years in power projected an image of instability and internal vulnerability that did not benefit the party. Despite Blair's reshuffles, reforms were gradually more difficult to approve, as Blair faced the opposition of his own party and realised that the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) was divided:

> The GB crew were agitating more or less openly for me to set a date departure. His allies were mainly to the left of my supporters, but he was also picking off a few of the younger, more Blairite ones, who for various reasons were drifting offside and, as I discovered later, were being made rather attractive promises of future promotion should they switch. (Blair, 2010: 604)

Leftists within the party such as Jon Cruddas and Douglas Alexander campaigned against Blair by writing critical pamphlets. Also, Robin Cook openly recommended finding a new leader for the party (Rawnsley, 2010: 323), and as mentioned above, Neil Kinnock began to oppose Blair's policies on education (Beckett, 2006: 34-35). The media (*Mail, Telegraph, Guardian, Independent,* and *Mirror*) wanted Blair out (Blair, 2010: 617) and such pressure around him and the feeling that he was no longer needed or wanted made Blair realise that he certainly had to leave. The last two years of Blair in government symbolised his political fall, and the end of New Labour's "modernisation project." The party and the government were no longer "new," the British people were used to the never ending and exhausted reforms in public services, and this together with internal conflicts between the Blairites and the Brownites, and the stain of the Iraq war precipitated Blair's departure on 27 June 2007. For Peter Mandelson, "the real problem, of course, remained: that the country showed every sign of falling out of love with Labour" (Mandelson, 2010: 487). It became gradually evident that the happiness, expectations and enthusiasm that embraced New Labour in 1997 turned into disenchantment and frustration after Blair's ten years in office. The British people and the Labour Party were disappointed with their Prime Minister, and Blair knew that his leadership was exhausted and his departure, inevitable:

> Some may belittle politics but we who are engaged in it know that it is where people stand all. Although I know that it has many harsh contentions, it is still the arena that sets the heart beating a little faster. If it is, on occasions, the place of low skulduggery, it is more often the place for the pursuit of noble causes. I wish everyone, friend or foe, well. That is that. The end. (Blair, 2010: 662)

2.5 FINAL THOUGHTS

Many described 1 May 1997 as a glorious day. The Labour Party had won a general election after eighteen years of conservative monopoly, and the long awaited wish came true when a young and new-looking Prime Minister entered the threshold of Number 10. In a personal interview I made to expert Luke Martell, he described the day as follows:

> It was fantastic, it was fantastic for the whole country, it was a really exciting day, I mean we had a huge vote, we had an absolutely massive vote of historical proportions. Mrs Thatcher had been in power for so long, and John Major retired afterwards, and the whole thing about him being young, different; at the time he felt like a new sort of politician, he had been brought up in the sixties, the new generation, the youth culture, rock music and all that sort of stuff. Yes, the atmosphere for the first six months or a year was historical in Britain, I think. It felt like a new era. (2011)

Blair promised outstanding reforms and was full of enthusiasm and initiative. Himself and his renamed team called New Labour had great expectations about what could be achieved, about all the things that could be changed, and about how much could be done and improved in the country: "They exclaimed that Britain deserved better. Hospitals, schools, roads—all things they said the Tories neglected—would be put right. With Blair leading the way, New Labour was going to make Britain great again" (Casey, 2009: 1). "The greatest nation on earth," as Blair called Britain in one of his last speeches on 10 May 2007, was the "Cool Britannia" he believed in, a great young and dynamic country that deserved a new government led by a new party (Blair, 2007).

The Labour Party had already begun a modernisation process during the Thatcher years. Consecutive Labour leaders—such as Neil Kinnock, John Smith and later Tony Blair—realised that the party required reforms to win elections, and this became Blair's main concern in 1994 when he became leader of the party. Blair believed that the world had changed and that Old Labour was in dire need of a new ideological approach that could follow the contemporary flow. Blair used the theory of the Third Way to justify his change of direction, a particular revisionism that was symbolised by the removal of Clause IV of the party constitution, thus detaching New Labour from the party's traditional commitment to state ownership and redistribution. With historical perspective, some experts have suggested that Blair was mainly pragmatic and non-

ideological and applied different convenient policies to analogously favour private enterprise and public services alike: "A pragmatic 'what's best is what works,' based upon good practice, formed the core of Blairite 'non-ideology'" (Tonge, 2009: 301). Others believe that Blair embodied a mixture of left-wing and right-wing ideologies:

> I don't think he was non-ideological, I think he was a mixture of ideologies basically, what I have just said, economically he was neoliberal, he just thought he got to be friendly to business and in globalization it is really important, you have to attract capital and so on; socially, he was a compassionate person, he cared about the poor. (Martell, 2011)

Blair's first term is today remembered for reforms and achievements that some would define as radical, and others as predictable. Peace in Northern Ireland, achieved after the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, was widely acclaimed as one of Blair's historic successes. Moreover, his efforts to integrate Britain in Europe, with a prospective British entrance in the single currency, inspired pro-European voices that saw in Blair a germ of hope for a future integration. Extra investment in public services such as health and education, the well-acclaimed Devolution of power to Scotland and Wales, and a successful economy thanks to Gordon Brown—considered one of the best Chancellors in history who achieved low unemployment and low inflation—became some of the acclaimed reforms of Blair's legacy.

However, other reforms were partially criticised, such was the case of the incomplete constitutional reform that included a never-achieved electoral amendment, and a partial and unsatisfactory reform of the House of Lords. Also, privatisations and the marketisation of the public services became the target of left-wing critics that emphasised Labour's U-turn in social policies and the growing process of conservatism that Blair had initiated. Finally, the troubled and controversial relationship between the government and the media framed an atmosphere of spin and lobbying, with Alastair Campbell heading the media machinery.

New Labour's second and third terms were Blair's times of trouble and final downfall. After Blair's long post-election honeymoon during his first term, several domestic crises put into question the government's efficiency to control unexpected situations: the Foot and Mouth Disease revealed Blair's directionless leadership, considerably diminishing the government's reputation. Yet, it would be the war in Iraq that finally dominated Blair's full second term, eroded his untouched popularity and

elicited domestic and international criticism. The Iraq war would eventually eclipse his internal agenda, a programme that was loaded with some important reforms in health and education and was aimed at improving standards in students, schools and hospitals. In this pursuit, Blair allowed the introduction of private funding, provided autonomy and economic incentives in exchange for results, and gave public services a new business-like character. All this provoked the opposition of left-wing critics and intellectuals that denounced Blair for having transformed the Labour Party into a conservative and neoliberal institution. Lastly, several Labour MP rebellions and Blair's always-troubled relationship with Gordon Brown mined the Prime Minister's leadership and pressed him for departure. Yet, his ambition made him run a third successful general election; his last two years in government were devoted to taking his previous reforms beyond and concluding what he called the New Labour project just before he eventually left office on 27 June 2007.

Despite criticism and general frustration, Blair's satisfaction with his legacy and his belief that "I did what I thought was right for our country" (Blair in BBC, 2007a) made him glorify his own achievements: "There is only one government since 1945 that can say all of the following: more jobs, fewer unemployed, better health and education results, lower crime and economic growth in every quarter. Only one government, this one" (2007). Nevertheless, experts such as Luke Martell suggest that Blairism will be remembered for being a mixture of positive and negative elements: "It was positive and negative. I think that historically it sort of confirmed the economic aspects of Thatcherism […] That era was continued. But I think in terms of things like education, and health and social provisions and so on, it saved some things" (Martell, 2011).

All in all, the truth is that the Labour Party under Blair achieved three consecutive electoral triumphs for the first time in history, thanks to triumphs such as the reduction of poverty, economic stability and peace in Northern Ireland. However, analysts complained that democracy had been damaged by a presidential government that diminished parliamentarian accountability and manipulated media and public opinion (Kershaw, 2007). Also, the stigma of Iraq affected Blair's reputation, and his unconditional support for the United States ultimately shadowed Blair's first term achievements (Seldon, 2007). Despite some positive reforms in health and education, the common perception was that problems in public services endured, and that New Labour's reforms conveyed an irreversible continuation of the previous conservative era; this was the so-called "Blatcherism" as Simon Jenkins defined it:

> Their "project" after 1994 may have been sold as tactical, "to make Labour electable" but its consequence was to render Thatcherism irreversible. Labour's election victories in 1997, 2001 and 2005 saw no return to high income tax rates, nationalization or employment protection. They saw no rush to European corporatism. Blair drove privatization into every corner of the public services. […] He emerged as one of the most authoritarian prime ministers of modern times. As the tabloids often said of him, "To Thatcher, a son." (Jenkins, 2007: 6)

To conclude, the feeling that the Blair years ended in disenchantment and disillusion after the early expectations of 1997 was generally perceived by experts, critics and intellectuals of the time. Many of these figures considered New Labour's performance "a lost opportunity" (Kershaw, 2007) and a disappointing delivery of what could have been, but was not. As Philip Stephens says, "such is the familiar narrative of politics: exaggerated expectations prefigure predictable disillusion. Longevity runs against the reputation of political leaders" (2008: 640).

3. BRITISH INTELLECTUALS IN THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

> Whatever the merits of the claim that in Britain this *species* either never existed or is now extinct, there can be no doubt that at the beginning of the twenty-first century the *term* itself is alive and well and living in the English language. (Collini, 2009: 40)

With the aim of analysing the counter-hegemonic productions of British intellectuals under the government of Tony Blair, it is necessary to have a broader perspective of the signification of intellectuals in Britain throughout the twentieth century and thus better understand the trajectory and the inherited legacy of those public figures that openly reacted against the politics of the British Prime Minister between 1997 and 2007. This chapter includes an introduction to the foundation of the term "intellectual" in France, for this country was considered the cradle of subversive *intellectuels* and exerted an influence on the establishment of the committed writer in Britain. The importance of the French paradigm not only lay in the constitution of the term itself, but also in the authoritative referent that it became in order to define the nature of British intelligentsia, establishing the standard by which British intellectuals were often measured. While French *intellectuels* conveyed the example of writers and thinkers who were politically committed to certain moral ideals and who fought against the established power, the British counterpart was frequently criticised for being represented by some elitist writers and philosophers who revolved around the borders of the establishment and the

political authority. As Michael Kelly maintains: "British intellectuals cannot easily be separated from the British elites, but are closely interwoven with them" (Kelly, 2003: 343). Against those voices that claim that the British intellectual does not exist for he/she is too close to power, I defend the need to recognise the evolution of the British intelligentsia in its own idiosyncrasy in order to understand that there exist progressive intellectuals in Britain but they have reacted in different ways to the challenges of history.

The following chapter thus presents a historical outline of British intellectuals from the late nineteenth century when the concept of "intellectual" was officially established in Europe to the rising questions of the early twentieth century—such as the ideological confrontation between Fascism and democracy that led to the Second World War—to later sociological changes in postwar Britain illustrated by the development of the welfare state in the 1950s, the social revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, and the birth of neoliberalism under Margaret Thatcher's rule in the 1980s. As will be shown, British intellectuals reacted in diverse manners to the demands of every specific historical conjuncture: this legacy will constitute the antecedents of the oppositional intelligentsia during Blair's premiership who, as analysed in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, experienced an optimistic enthusiasm for the rise of Blair as new leader of the Labour Party and a later disenchantment after three terms of Blair in office.

3.1 THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY INTELLECTUAL: THE FRENCH MODEL

> We want the work of art to be an act as well; we want it to be expressly conceived as an arm in man's struggle against evil. (Sartre, 1947: 237)

In order to identify the origins of the term "intellectual" in Britain we cannot but mention the legacy of nineteenth century France and its *intellectuels*, and Russia and its *intelligentsia* as the roots of such controversial concept (see Kochetkova, 2010; Drake, 2005). Some authors have argued that radical intellectuals precisely emerged out of political crises and contexts of social revolution in which they demanded civil rights and liberties, and struggled against the autocratic authority of their times (Shatz, 1989: 59). Both Western Europe and Russia were particularly marked by social revolutions from

the late eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, which, together with the rise of socialism, inspired the educated classes to demand political reforms. As Marshall Shatz put it: "Nineteenth-century socialism was basically a demand for political power by an educated bourgeoisie" (1989: 57). The long-standing British democratic tradition, established before the French Revolution, did not prevent social rebellions in the recently industrialised Britain, yet the European and the French cannon of revolution would inevitably function as a referent. The French *intellectuel* acquired particular revolutionary significations and was installed as the model for intellectual rebellion.

The concept of *intellectuel* was originated in the late nineteenth century in France a propos of the proliferation of prestigious men and women of letters who challenged the power of institutions—such as the Church, as well as the political, cultural and educational establishment (Drake, 2005: 2). The term was developed throughout the twentieth century, thus becoming inescapably a transnational referent that identified who the intellectuals were and how they contributed to understand and improve civilisation. In this context, the notion of the writer in action—who participated in the direct course of history and politics through collective association with other equals—appeared after the so-called Dreyfus Affair in 1898, when a French army officer, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, was accused of treason to the nation for having released state secrets. Popular opinion became divided between those who supported Dreyfus's innocence, the "Dreyfusards," and those who blamed him, the "anti-Dreyfusards," a conflict that increased its intensity due to Dreyfus's Jewish origins, for the polemic and the confrontation also opposed anti-Semite intellectuals on the one hand, and the pro-Semitic on the other (Derfler, 2002: 1-6). Dreyfus's consequent imprisonment inspired many writers and highbrow thinkers of the time to take part in either side, suddenly configuring these politically committed writers as intellectuals who considered their role of "men of letters" extremely influential in the political events of their time. For these thinkers, writing had become an effective weapon in particular socio-historical conditions: writing could support a cause or act in opposition to it, but it always had to be commitment in action.

In the right-wing nationalist and anti-Dreyfus sector a figure stood out: Maurice Barrès was a committed novelist and later an iconic intellectual who used his literature of "action" to shape a new perspective and a new attitude towards the world. Perhaps with the same intention but with different political views there could be found left-wing

and socialist thinkers Alexandre Millerand, Jean Jaurès, Leon Blum and Emile Zola; being the latter specially committed to the Dreyfus cause, he famously wrote his open letter *J'accuse*, published in defence of officer Dreyfus in *L'Aurore* on 13 January 1898. The letter was aimed to publicly denounce the abuse of French military authorities when suppressing evidence in the trial against Dreyfus, who was, in turn, thought to be by many writers and thinkers of the time innocent of the charges (Read, 2013: 215-218; Derfler, 2002: 1-6). Zola's letter was followed by a manifesto signed by liberal professionals—writers, teachers, and scholars—all of them highly educated people who demanded a revision of the trial; such committed action was consequently utilised as an example of how an intellectual force could oppose the political power in the name of truth and justice, thus paving the way for the constitution of the collective term "intellectuals."

The Dreyfus Affair became Zola's opportunity to show his commitment to contemporary political events. With his *J'accuse* letter, Zola vindicated that writing had become a revolutionary means to achieve truth and justice: "And the action I am taking here is merely a revolutionary means to hasten the revelation of truth and justice" (Zola, 1996: 53). This was the intellectuals' commitment to their reality, a revolutionary claim that aimed to change the state of politics by emphasising the importance of knowledge and culture as a moral guide to judgement. These were the *civilising writers*, because through their criticism they represented a guide for a whole generation and broadened the horizon of human understanding (Winock, 1997: 12). This passionate urge for claiming justice entailed publicly exposing their ideals and beliefs, and thus opposing official power and gaining enemies on their way. As engaged action was targetted at, and conditional upon political changes, the Dreyfus Affair became an example of how liberal intelligentsia encouraged popular uprising and risked their own safety and liberty in support for Dreyfus (Drake, 2005: 16-17). These writers were eventually positioned on the margins of the political establishment and were revolutionary and nonconformist anti-establishment individuals who used the media (newspapers and journals) to denounce and defend certain moral principles.

Gradually, political ideology proved to be a driving force for the demands of intellectuals, and socialism in particular became the banner of social justice for most of these voices. During the Spanish Civil War, different authors used their writings as an instrument of contestation within the political realm, and some of them even joined the Spanish Republican Army to defend what they thought to be a moral cause. Writer and

thinker Eric Hobsbawm, when reviewing the role of international intellectuals in the Spanish war, remarked: "Unlike in the second world war, the wrong side won. But it is largely due to the intellectuals, the artists and writers who mobilised so overwhelmingly in favour of the republic, that in this instance history has not been written by the victors" (Hobsbawm, 2007a). He went on saying: "In creating the world's memory of the Spanish civil war, the pen, the brush and the camera wielded on behalf of the defeated have proved mightier than the sword and the power of those who won" (2007a). For Hobsbawm, writing became a crucial weapon during the conflict since only through writing it remained the testimony of the experiences and demands of the defeated; in this sense, literature seemed to be the last resort to safeguard the principles of those who fought. Among the French writers who helped promote the republican spirit were Jean Guéhenno, Jacques Kayser and Simon Téry. Yet, there were other intellectuals whose commitment went beyond writing: André Malraux, André Chamson and Jean-Richard Bloch were representative writers who volunteered to fight for and/or supported the left-wing anti-fascist front in Spain. Specifically, Malraux's novel *L'Espoir,* published in 1937 as a form of propaganda on the Republic, reassured

> the engagement with the present, the desire to impact upon the real through the act of writing […] Malraux's heroes are, by and large, individuals who intellectualise their political experiences, contextualising these within an ongoing and seemingly permanent struggle for human meaning in a hostile world. (Hurcombe, 2011: 151)

These revolutionary men wrote about their experiences and reflections in war, thus embodying real-life examples of how literature and the political reality conjoined. In some cases, their moral and political liability exceeded the merely literary commitment in order to become real action, as they took any kind of risk to support the revolutionary cause: "Le modèle de l'écrivain engagé, n'hésitant pas à prendre tous les risques pour defender la cause révolutionnaire des peuples" (Winock, 1997: 281).[39] For Malraux, the intellectual's responsibility went beyond the cultural scope: it required engaged action.

Later in 1945, new writers and intellectuals perpetuated the sense of historical responsibility that bestowed upon them the leading function of defending truth and

[39] "The model of the engaged writer does not hesitate to assume any risk in order to defend the revolutionary cause of the people" (my translation).

justice and thus change contemporary society. It would be Jean-Paul Sartre the exemplary and archetypal left-wing intellectual committed not only to advance the social cause, but also to the belief that political writing and literature were the moral duty of those thinkers who aspired to achieve a social and political transformation. Sartre and his left-wing magazine *Les Temps Modernes* extolled the role of the writer as a committed intellectual, thus founding what the author would define as *littérature engagée* or "committed literature," and disapproving the "Art for Art's sake" philosophy that some contemporary writers advocated. For Sartre, literature and the writer had a political *ultra-responsibility* even within silence (388). The thinker or the intellectual had the captivating power and the responsibility to change reality through "utilitarian" writing, for words were "loaded weapons" that needed to be used with a purpose, that of social transformation:

> L'écrivain est appelé à une mission: donner sens à son temps, contribuer aux changements nécessaires. L'impératif de l'engagement est porté à son comble. Il ne s'agit plus d'exiger du romancier ou du philosophe d'écrire, en marge de son œuvre, des articles politiques ou de signer des pétitions. Sartre affirme que toute prose, même la fiction, est "utilitaire," que toute prose engage. Les mots sont des "pistolets chargés," il convient donc de bien viser, et non de tirer au hasard comme un enfant. (400)[40]

As Sartre himself put it:

> Thus we must write for our own time, as the great writers did. But this does not imply that we must shut ourselves up in it. To write for our time does not mean to reflect it passively. It means that we must will to maintain it or change it; therefore, go beyond it toward the future; and it is this effort to change it which establishes us most deeply in it; for it can never be reduced to a dead mass of tools and customs. (1947: 240-241)

Many French writers, from the Dreyfus Affair to the illustrative role of Jean-Paul Sartre, institutionalised the model of the twentieth-century intellectual, which is still today understood as the public figure that, only through his/her writing and

[40] "The writer is called to a mission: to make sense of his time and contribute to the necessary changes. The imperative of commitment is taken to the extreme. It is not about demanding that the novelist or the philosopher write political articles or sign manifestos in the margins of his work. Sartre affirms that all prose, even fiction, is 'utilitarian,' all prose is engaged. Words are 'loaded weapons:' it is better to aim with precision, and not to shoot blindly like a child" (my translation).

independently from other political or practical activities, exerts political activism with the written word. These writers consequently established a guide for critical conscience independent from and still opposed to power:

> Once one understands that, from the Dreyfus Affair onwards, the role of intellectuals in France has been *defined* in political terms, it becomes important to identify the sense of "political action" that was involved. That elusive but potent term "*engagement*" did not for the most part connote a commitment to the life of the party official, or the full-time union organizer, or the elected representative. Rather, it involved taking a public stand on major issues of the day, especially those issues which could, in the Manichean terms made available by this political tradition, be seen as clear conflicts between justice and injustice. And a public stand usually meant writing an article, making a speech, or, most frequently of all, signing a petition or protests. (Collini, 2009: 260-261)

Thus, the French legacy established the standard that typified the dimension of transgression of the intellectual. As previously argued, intellectuals were thinkers, philosophers and writers whose *littérature engagée* sought to be the weapon and the guide to warn against injustice and power abuse, meaning that the committed writer, engaged with his/her reality, became an instrument of contestation and a defendant of a political or ideological cause. Political commitment and public representation was, for many, the distinctive marks that turned a writer into "an intellectual" (Said, 2002: 19-39), this is what Antonio Gramsci called "pure intellectuals" (1995: 460) and "organic intellectuals" (1971: 6). For Edward Said, real intellectuals were those who "moved by metaphysical passion and disinterested principles of justice and truth, they denounce corruption, defend the weak, defy imperfect or oppressive authority" (1996: 5). The notion of the intellectual seemed to be determined by his/her political discourse, which productively ascribed these voices the role of critics and cultural analysts of their own time helping to understand reality, history and society. Nevertheless, committed writing was only a facet to identify the real intellectual. For many of these writers, the revolutionary position also implied to oppose power as dissident voices and react against a pre-established system or a dominant culture. They had to be marginal "counter-power" forces that resisted injustice and denounced the abuses of authority with outrage, standing on the margins of society as outsiders, aliens and independent thinkers. Intellectuals represented therefore a critical social force, they were

transgressors and provocative thinkers who felt committed to and responsible for the time they were living in.

However, not all twentieth-century writers were regarded as "real intellectuals," since theorists defined the real intellectual in different and opposing ways. Such was the case of Julien Benda and his most acknowledged work *La Trahison des Clerks* (1927) which examined the term "intellectual" and observed how thinkers of his time had abandoned the original medieval aspiration of the universal truth by embracing specific national and political ambitions—what Benda saw as the real-life, mundane and pragmatic truths of the common man (Benda, 2007: 22-25). That is, modern intellectuals—Benda's *clerks*—betrayed the authentic purpose of medieval clergymen who aspired to exert a universal and moralising function independently from political causes, and instead, inspired by race, class or nation they became members of a political party (Drake, 2005: 102). Benda believed that real intellectuals had abandoned the rationality of truth that previously identified highbrow *clerks* in order to be swept along by political passions and strong doctrines that imposed "a particular form of morality, of intelligence, of sensibility" (Benda, 2007: 26-27):

> It is as natural as it is evident that this adhesion of the "clerks" to the passions of the laymen fortifies these passions in the hearts of the latter. [...] And then especially, the "clerk" by adopting political passions, brings them the tremendous influence of his sensibility if he is an artist, of his persuasive power if he is a thinker, and in either case his moral prestige. (47)

Benda's *La Trahison des Clerks* became a classical text in intellectual twentieth-century thinking, but the semantics of this "treason" evolved with the passing of time. While the concept of a political, dissident, left-wing and progressive intellectual was standardised and imposed, the "treason" of the intellectual distorted the original vision of Benda's argument and embraced an antagonistic position: "the treason of the intellectual" was thus adopted by revolutionary intellectuals who criticised either those writers who were apparently committed to a liberal cause but remained truly apathetic and enclosed in their ivory tower, or those who were attached to the political authority and were protected by the arm of power. This became the eventual significance of the "treason of the intellectual," an expression assigned to those thinkers and writers who had abandoned the real political commitment and established themselves in a position of comfort and middle-class embourgeoisement. In this sense, some revolutionary

French intellectuals who had brought exemplariness to the political cause due to their nonconformist attitude in society were also attacked by their contemporaries for not being completely faithful to this function and for being eventually enclosed in a position of power within a particular ideological establishment. Such was the case of Sartre himself, who, despite being considered the intellectual *par excellence*, the avant-garde writer, also saw the opposition of other left-wing philosophers, Albert Camus specifically, who attacked him for his contradictions. The Camus-Sartre rivalry contributed to the intellectual debate of the time and to the understanding of *littérature engagée* from two perspectives, the ones of these two progressive thinkers. Whereas they shared the vision of the writer as bearer of political resistance and political commitment, Sartre set himself up as the spokesman for the Soviet communism in French debates, something that Camus opposed, as he was a convinced defendant of a more humanist view of socialism. For Camus, Sartre's incongruent position with regards to a particular political authority put into question his systematic opposition to power abuse, thus challenging his prestige as a committed writer:

> Sartre was willing to side with the Communist movement in spite of the evils of the Soviet Union, because he saw it as the only real hope and political expression of the majority of France's workers. He criticised Camus for rejecting it without searching for an alternative. But Camus's critique of revolution was his critique of Communism: both were built on a fundamentally wrong and destructive approach to humans, history, and reality itself. (Aronson, 2004: 151)

This battle became explicit in Camus and Sartre's exchange of accusing letters in *Les Temps Moderns* and in subsequent publications by the protagonists, such as Camus's novel *La Plague* (1947), and most importantly his acclaimed *L'Homme Revolté* (1951), in which the writer accused communists such as Sartre of justifying Soviet crimes. Camus, who had once been a communist, later defined himself as an ex-Marxist advocating a sort of humanism that was, in his view, inexistent in Stalinist Marxism, and criticised any kind of systematic violence acclaimed in the name of freedom and justice:

> But slave camps under the flag of freedom, massacres justified by philanthropy or by a taste for the superhuman, in one sense cripple judgement. […]
>
> In the age of ideologies, we must examine our position in relation to murder. If murder has rational foundations, then our period and we ourselves are rationally

> consequent. If it has no rational foundations, then we are insane and there is no alternative but to find some justification or to avert our faces. (Camus, 1991: 4)

Therefore, the example set by the French model of intellectual, with Sartre in the lead, shows that the idyllic referent of the French intellectual as an always counter-power and nonconformist figure presents some incoherence. The twentieth-century French intellectual, many times a quintessential image to which the British intellectuals aspired, discloses contradictions and imperfections, which effectively invites oneself to be critical of those voices who have denounced with resignation that a full-time political intellectual in Britain does not exist, and if he/she does, he/she is more often than not attached to power. The treason of the intellectual has been a common concern and an eternal critique of the twentieth-century intellectual, French or British, the exemplariness of some left-wing radical thinkers was many times contested by their own contradictions and inconsistencies. The twentieth-century British model would be no different: the paradox of the perfect intellectual always found opponents and detractors who deplored the fact that that radical intelligentsia often remained contradictory and was attached to a particular power—political, governmental or ideological. However, even despite their inconsistencies, intellectuals exerted, as generally believed, a radical transformative role in societies.

3.2 INTELLECTUALS IN BRITAIN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The French model of intellectual established the canon of the "systematic" politically engaged twentieth-century thinker, that is, the type of intellectual who, systematically opposed to power, assumed the category of the real intellectual. This widely acknowledged referent against which the British intelligentsia was measured provoked an eternal debate when it came to defining the essence of the British intellectual. Who were the twentieth-century British intellectuals? Have they been politically and systematically committed to contravene power? Or have they been, on the contrary, complicit with it? As Michael Kelly remarks: "[British intellectuals] are by turns castigated for their recklessness, lacking a sense of social responsibility; for their impotence, lacking purchase on the affairs of the nation; or for their elitism, lacking the will to emerge from their ivory towers, or their dreaming spires" (Kelly, 2003: 344).

The ongoing discussion around the identity of British intellectuals divided those who believed that there was no such thing as a subversive intellectual in Britain, and those who believed that British intelligentsia represented a unique case of writers and thinkers too supportive of power, or not completely systematic in their political dissidence. The figure of the British intellectual, understood as an outsider or as an oppositional force, was not as visible as it was in France. Different experts have pointed out that whereas French intellectuals exercised a counter-power force signing collective manifestos and protests, the British counterpart was more identified by its individuality (344), and on many occasions, instead of being insurgent against power, British writers have been more reliant on the ruling elite. As Stefan Collini put forth in his book *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (2006), power and intellectuals in Britain constituted "Happy Families" (Collini, 2009: 137-155), in which the British intelligentsia, he suggested, was "too tolerant," "too adaptable" and "too apolitical" (5). This perceived elitism of British writers made them ally themselves with power instead of fighting against it. Likewise, the term "intellectual" traditionally conveyed pejorative meanings—normally associated with snobbishness—that evoked rejection and self-denial on the writers' part, increasing the uneasy identification of British intellectuals who refused to be labelled as such:

> In Britain, it is only too common to hear people talk dismissively of "the chattering classes" and those considered "too clever by half," a notion that a French person would have difficulty in grasping, are treated with considerable suspicion. No wonder that it is said that the philosopher and Nobel prize winner Bertrand Russell once remarked, "Whatever you do, don't call me an intellectual." (Drake, 2005: 3)

Other experts have argued that these intellectuals' invisibility did not imply their absence, in the same way that it did not mean that twentieth-century British intellectuals were not capable of dissidence and political action. It is necessary to acknowledge that the British model of intelligentsia was not characterised by its inexistence; instead, there was probably a prejudiced exclusion, a denial, and a self-rejection of writers who did not identify themselves with this class:

> Britain is a country in which the word "intellectual" is often preceded by the sneering adjective "so-called," where smart people are put down because they are "too clever by half" and where a cerebral politician (David Willetts) was for years saddled with the soubriquet "Two Brains." It's a society in which creative

> engineers are labelled "boffins" and kids with a talent for mathematics or computer programming are "nerds." As far as the Brits are concerned, intellectuals begin at Calais and gravitate to Paris, where the fact that they are lionised in its cafes and salons is seen as proof that the French, despite their cheese- and wine-making skills, are fundamentally unsound. (Naughton, 2011)

Against this evident inferiority complex, some authors have foregrounded the existence of British thinkers as having an active role in political life, and recent voices have defended the importance of current intellectual debates in Britain: "Although the British like to portray themselves as 'anti-intellectual,' the UK is very likely the most intellectual nation in the English-speaking world, judged in terms of the quantity and quality of its academic and mass intellectual media" (Fuller, Steve 2006: 5). In my view, British intellectuals have been and still are alive, and have contributed with their work to the conceptualisation of the British intelligentsia; it was, as in the French case, their sectarian political commitment what defined their identity as intellectuals, even despite contradictions and incongruences that exist and have existed in both French and British contexts, they still helped not only understand society, but also change and construct reality. The historical evolution of British intellectuals throughout the twentieth century demonstrates that a rebellious intelligentsia played a significant role in British society. As happened with the French model, British writers were also contradictory and ambiguous, and many defended the values of social justice and equality while personally claiming for privileges attached to their intellectual elitism. And yet, as will be described in the following pages, it is still crucial to recognise their functionality as counter-power voices.

3.2.1 Historical Evolution of the British Intellectual in the Twentieth Century

For much of the nineteenth century until the 1920s, British intellectuals were often featured by a classicist elitism that fought to preserve certain social privileges. Still and all, from 1880 to the First World War new emerging thinkers challenged established cultural precepts with new ideas rooted in the social, scientific and political changes of the period (Stedman Jones and Claeys, 2011: 2-3). Despite this exclusive consideration of men and women of letters, a moderate social transgression materialised in their anti-establishment discourses.

The nineteenth-century political thought was strongly influenced by the French Revolution and the idea of "progress" that, understood in political, social, economic and scientific terms, was sought to improve the middle-class standards of living (2). Yet, by the end of the century, growth began to be interpreted not only as an improvement of the material conditions of living, but also as an urgent need to spread "civilisation," that is, the advance of culture in terms of morals, values and beliefs (3). Matthew Arnold's emblematic work *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) precisely emphasised the importance of acquiring perfection through literacy, a maxim that went in tune with the Victorian precept that through education citizens could make themselves and could contribute to develop the good society. Knowledge and literacy were foundations that identified the elitism of a cultural class that, at the same time, claimed for a more expanded and democratised access to knowledge by the popular masses. These intellectuals belonged therefore to the very same established society they wanted to change: "Never fancying themselves as an alternative government, they satisfied themselves with various forms of indirect influence. Retaining independence, they belonged to the very regime they sought to change" (Lubenow, 1998: 2). However, not all nineteenth-century intellectuals were highbrow figures. The Chartist era back in the 1830s had already given rise to what Aruna Krishnamurthy called "the working-class intellectual," the figure of educated labour leaders that exerted the public function of convincing their followers of the need to claim for social rights, and "persuading their very diverse readers and audiences towards a consideration of working-class realities" (2009: 2). These working-class intellectuals were in a position of hierarchical superiority, and therefore power over their equals, which identified the intellectual—either working-class or bourgeois and literate—as distinguished middlebrow and highbrow figures that differentiated themselves for their counter-hegemonic narratives (4).

Together with these historically unrecognised working-class intellectuals, other selected writers also contributed to construct social and political critiques to and from the establishment. The first embryonic reference of highbrow British intellectuals was precisely settled at the University of Cambridge where an intellectual discussion group—composed by liberal thinkers well integrated in Victorian Britain—"held avant-garde opinions […] and through their writings and their work in a number of professions they exerted a persistent force over public opinion" (Allen, 1978: vii). This group, commonly known as the Cambridge Apostles, was founded in 1820 under the leadership of Frederick Denison Maurice, Arthur Hallam and Alfred Tennyson with the

aim of holding debates, discussions and intellectual reflections about existential questions, culture, society, and literature. It became a hermetic society with an exclusive atmosphere of intellectual superiority—"they were an elite within an elite" (Lubenow, 1998: xiii)—and was very influential not only at the University but also in the British society at large. Nevertheless, even despite the fact that they were initially rebellious and nonconformist students who opposed the traditional and hierarchical structure of the University and the teaching system, they eventually became authoritative voices throughout Victorian society "allied to the Establishment, yet persistently liberal in their influence" (Allen, 1978: 10). They continued to educate and inspire new younger generations of students who gradually joined the group, keeping it alive and productive all along the twentieth century.

The Bloomsbury Group would end up being the Apostles's "cultural successors but, in several cases, their descendants" (viii). At the beginning of the twentieth century, a group of artists, writers and thinkers—some of them heirs to the Cambridge Apostles such as John Maynard Keynes, Leonard Woolf and Lytton Strachey—constituted an intellectual discussion group in the London area of Bloomsbury that actively worked with ideas and publications in many different fields of knowledge: from literature, art, and art criticism to economics, political and social theory. The group's apogee took place in the Modernist 1920s after the First Wold War when members of the group Vanessa and Clive Bell, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, Desmond and Molly MacCarthy, among others, joined to share liberal and reformist ideas. The Bloomsbury group's cultural force resided in their vindications for a social, political and cultural revolution as a means to achieve a better and more humanistic civilisation that opposed the "barbarism" of the First World War, nonsensical imperialism and fascist tyranny to the precepts of democracy and freedom (Froula, 2005: 1). In this respect, some analysts such as Christine Froula argued that these writers were strongly politicised: "Bloomsbury integrates political and suprapolitical thinking with aesthetics" (3); whereas others have pointed out that despite any unconscious interpretations of Bloomsbury's politicisation, the group's relationship with power has broadly been argued to be inexistent. These intellectuals' commitment to justice and to the socialist ideal—such as Leonard Woolf's anti-imperialist and pacifist views—functioned more

within a rhetorical domain than within real activism.[41] Moreover, in spite of their pacifist avant-garde and early liberal beliefs about feminism, sexuality, civilisation and anti-fascism, their upper-class aristocratic lifestyles led them carry a very elitist and exclusive concept of culture and knowledge, which was represented by the "high modernism" of Virginia Woolf (Lewis, 2008: 96). The modernist conception defended consequently that the writer or the intellectual had to be a figure detached from society—being the latter understood not only as a historical reality, but also as a social structure: the interaction between the masses and the intellectual elite was seen as unfeasible, for the intellectual elitism was understood as the writer's alienation from the common man, deifying therefore the concept of the artist (see Berman, 1994).

However, although Modernism has been many times interpreted as a "ahistorical" movement detached from a particular historical reality, some critics such as Georg Lukács pointed out that the Modernist aesthetic was also a political one (Eysteinsson, 1990: 14). For Lukács, the intellectual exclusivity of the Modernists was a form of cultural fascism: "It is possible to see how, for Lukács and indeed for social realists in general, Modernism came to be seen either as a kind of fellow traveller of Fascism, or a Trojan horse within the socialist camp—or both" (Wood, 1993: 320). According to Mary Gluck, "Lukács's argument against modernism, taken in its broadest construction, had to do not so much with the modernists' complicity with fascism but, rather, with their impotence to forge effective weapons against it" (Gluck, 1986: 881). The intellectual elitism of Modernism, ingrained in a bourgeois ideology, assumed that knowledge was an exclusive privilege of some few who, despite attempts to be detached from the historical reality, were, at the same time and unconsciously, participants of it. The modernist political apathy could be read in terms of "cultural subversion" or historical dissidence:

> It is at this point that the whole notion of modernism moving the communicative act of reading "outside of history" shows itself to be a contradiction in terms, for the very detection of either exaggerated formal manoeuvres or distorted representations of reality assumes some kind of "norm," a symbolic and semiotic order that underlies our every act of social communication. (Eysteinsson, 1990:16)

[41] Writers and critics F.R. and Queenie D. Leavis were particularly critical about Bloomsbury and its apparent politicisation, and even more specifically of Virginia Woolf, whom they accused of being extremely bourgeois.

Thus, during the early years of the twentieth century, the mainstream class of intellectuals belonged to a prestigious social class and to superior and highly gifted social spheres. As John Carey argues in his book *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992), intellectuals in Britain always tried to remain an exclusive class detached from the masses in order to retain their privileges, power, knowledge, and social position. For Carey, "the 'mass' is, of course, a fiction. Its function, as a linguistic device, is to eliminate the human status of the majority of people—or, at any rate, to deprive them of those distinctive features that make users of the term, in their own esteem, superior" (1992: vii). For the author, Modernism was an "anti-democratic civilizing elite" that "could not, of course, actually prevent the masses from attaining literacy. But they could prevent them reading literature by making it too difficult for them to understand—and this is what they did" (16).

The epitome of Modernism in poetry, T.S. Eliot, was likewise a defender of high-culture and was particularly concerned with what he considered the growing cultural decline in the 1920s. Eliot's conservatism was present in his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948) where he expressed his reaction against the welfare state and the principles of redistribution and democratisation, as he believed "that democracy and mass education were incompatible with cultural values and would inevitably produce a faceless mass society" (Dworkin, 1997: 80). As the author himself stated:

> I incline to believe that no true democracy can maintain itself unless it contains these different levels of culture. The levels of culture may also be seen as levels of power, to the extent that a smaller group at a higher level will have equal power with a larger group at a lower level; for it may be argued that complete equality means universal irresponsibility. (Eliot, 2010: 37)

Eliot defended high culture as the guarantee of superior individuals and claimed for a new class system based on "meritocracy headed by a cultural elite" (Hamilton, 2008: 56). His republican origins in America, his beliefs in order, religion and tradition, his opposition to Marxism and socialism, and his Darwinist concept of knowledge made him identify with, but not explicitly support fascist ideology, despite of being a time when intellectuals felt the need to take a political stand in the European ideological battle.

Someone who certainly supported Fascism during the late 1920s and 1930s was the author and cultural analyst Wyndham Lewis. Sometimes considered an "aggressive"

(Foshay, 1992: 4) and "provocative" (Sherry, 2000: 138) writer, Lewis declared that only a few men could achieve perfection through art and the power of aesthetics, while the masses would "always remain as puppets or automata" (Bolton, 2011); in this sense, the intellectual, for Lewis, had to be completely independent from participative politics. This cultural elitism that Lewis advocated was what initially made him close to the high modernism of the Bloomsbury Group when defending ideas of aestheticism and apolitical art, yet he soon criticised their bohemian liberalism and their defence of left-wing ideals. At this point, Lewis refused to be associated with the left and began to be allied with right-wing writers such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot (Bolton, 2011). Lewis's moralising and antidemocratic beliefs eventually led him support Hitler's Fascism, as shown in some of his works such as *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926) and *Time and Western Time* (1927) in which he expressed his defence of high culturalism—as the separation between the intellectual elite and the masses—his rejection of democracy, and his scepticism towards the people's power: "The vote of the free citizen is a farce […] so 'democratic' government is far more effective than subjugation by physical conquest" (Lewis, 1969: 108).

Fascism in Britain became a noteworthy ideological force among the upper classes and some intellectuals who, entrenched in a strong heritage of Victorian moral that fuelled by nationalism, order, tradition, and family values, saw in this ideology, among other factors, a salvation from working-class mass movements. And yet, Fascism as a political structure failed in Britain, since conservative Prime Ministers such as Winston Churchill opposed the tyranny of the Nazi regime (Hamilton, 1971: 257). In the intellectual realm, some left-wing writers such as George Orwell, W.H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNiece and Cecil Day Lewis turned to communism to counteract Fascism, and the Spanish Civil War became, as previously mentioned, the intellectual battleground where writers took a stand in this internationally antagonistic context. Evelyn Waugh, for instance, would declare his support for Franco; T.S. Eliot and H.G. Wells would be neutral (259), despite the fact that these writers—and others such as W.B. Yeats and Roy Campbell—were openly seduced by fascist ideology. Others, however, such as George Orwell, Stephen Spender and Laurie Lee fought by the republicans in Spain (Wallhead, 2011).

It was precisely the Britain of the 1930s that represented the turning point that reversed the escalation of intellectual elitism, becoming the onset era of anti-fascist British intellectuals committed to left-wing ideals half way between socialism and

communism. The writers of the Auden generation—with figures such as Stephen Spender, W.H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Cecil Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice—were passionately committed to the era of ideologies in which they lived and were visceral defenders of the humanist and universal values of truth and justice. As Spender himself wrote: "During the thirties many people identified the politics of the intellectuals with the orthodoxy of the anti-Fascist left. Fascism meant dictatorship, censorship, the persecution of the Jews, the destruction of intellectual freedom. To be anti-Fascist was to be on the side of humanity" (1971: x).

The ideological debate of this decade would be monopolised by several journals—especially *The Nation* and *The New Age*—whose editorials became a referent of analysis and criticism of the new social reality with a particular, but not exclusive, socialist influence. Many important poets, novelists and critics from diverse political backgrounds—George Bernard Shaw, James Joyce, H.G. Wells, A.E. Randall, Holbrook Jackson, S.G. Hobson, and Ezra Pound—wrote for these journals, and many of them deployed this space to systematise collective responses and foster the left-wing revolutionary ideals of justice and solidarity (Collini, 2009: 92-93; also see Martin, 1967; Clarke, 1978). A third influential journal founded in 1934, *The Left Review*, also promoted debates and discussions on contemporary economics, politics and culture from a left-wing outlook. Particularly, "the successive editors of *Left Review* were Communists. They showed devotion to the Soviet Union, attempted to make literature a weapon for social struggle and wished it to become effective propaganda for the CPGB" (Masuda, 2010: 72). This journal became a pioneer quarterly of Marxist criticism in Britain and a benchmark for discussions of the counter-power radical intelligentsia:

> It produced the first Marxist literary theory in Britain and a body of criticism of striking originality. It was born of the spirit of the Popular Front—or People's Front, as it was known in Britain—which had been organized to stop fascism and whose policy, as the name suggests, was based on reaching out to people who shared the concern about social injustice and threats to democracy. (Margolies, 1998: 1)

The Left Review became the birthplace of a left-wing sector of British writers who were steadily committed to socialist ideals, thus symbolising a rupture with the previous elitist tradition of British intelligentsia. Among the writers who contributed to the journal were W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Eric Gill, Storm Jameson, Naomi

Mitchison, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Charles Madge, Anthony Blunt, and Lewis Grassic Gibbon (1), all of whom constituted a collective communist and socialist force that functioned as a single voice against Fascism, exerted public pressure and demanded democratic values and freedom for imprisoned writers (2). These intellectuals were the committed political voices of the leftist revolutionary era of Britain who worked in coordination with other European writers who shared the spirit of the Popular Front.[42] Therefore, the 1930s in Britain consolidated the idea of "the intellectual" as the oppositional and transgressive figure that fought for freedom and democracy, thus embodying the collective identity of the British intellectual who was committed to contemporary historical circumstances and shared a social and political consciousness (Hynes, 1976: 11). These writers' conviction that they were living in an era of crisis (of democratic and libertarian values) eventually made many of them use their writings with a moral and political purpose (13).

In this context, the figure of George Orwell arose as the prototype of independent left-wing engaged writer in the late 1930s. He became the symbol *par excellence* of the left-wing British thinker fully committed to his ideals not only with his literature, but also with his actions when for instance he enlisted in the Republican Army in the Spanish Civil War. His conviction to defend the socialist cause proved his interest in depicting the conditions of the working class, and also in actively condemning those intellectuals who did not combat Fascism in the battlefield and who operated exclusively in literary terms. Orwell's criticism of the British intelligentsia lay in his despise for liberal thinkers who vindicated socialist principles and were falsely engaged with the values they verbally defended. For Orwell, intellectuals were an elitist class who was not truly committed to social change:

> The mentality of the English left-wing intelligentsia can be studied in half a dozen weekly and monthly papers. The immediately striking thing about all these papers is their generally negative, querulous attitude, their complete lack at all times of any constructive suggestion. […] Another marked characteristic is the emotional shallowness of people who live in a world of ideas and have little contact with

[42] The Popular Front, more than an international organisation, was a widespread ideological spirit that appeared in different European countries in the face of Fascism. It intended to counteract the fascist ideology from the unity of left-wing forces: "The Popular Front was a device to build political unity among democratic forces, linking worker and bourgeois across barriers of social class, in order to mount domestic and international resistance to the greater common enemy of fascism and the authoritarian Right" (Graham and Preston, 1987: 4).

> physical reality. Many intellectuals of the Left were flabbily pacifist up to 1935-9, and then promptly cooled off when the war started. (Orwell, 1981: 274)

Being an intellectual himself, Orwell was particularly critical of British intelligentsia. In his view, the "true" intellectual was required to be a complete outsider and independent thinker detached from any specific ideology or doctrine that could remove the person's freedom, corrupt his/her aspirations and justify totalitarianism, which ultimately "undermines the possibility of your leading a life in which you are free to think your own thoughts […], leads to proliferation of great cruelty" and damages the concept of "objective truth" (Conant, 2005: 92). Orwell attacked what he called the "hypocrisy of leftists" that opposed conservative governments but did not criticise Stalinism (Runciman, 2008: 174), meaning that the loyalty of left-wing intellectual to particular ideologies made the individual eventually unable to stand critically against oppression and injustice. Orwell was

> however, very critical of the pressures brought to bear on himself and other intellectuals, to toe a particular party line instead of thinking aggressively, progressively, politically, and, most of all, independently, as he feels befit the true function of the intellectual. In fact he believes strongly that such critique is essential to the role of the intellectual. (Stewart, 2003: 36)

Orwell's dislike of his contemporary intellectuals embodied the contradiction of being himself the prototypical British intellectual engaged with his historical reality and with socialism. In this respect, he served as an illustration of "the anti-intellectualism of the intellectual" (Collini, 2009: 372), or in Anthony Stewart's words: "His ambivalence regarding his standing as an intellectual enables him to appropriate the intellectual's social function, on the one hand, while standing in judgement of it on the other" (2003: 15). Orwell's ambivalence and contradictions, and "his contentious stance often situates Orwell in between groups" (33). Despite the fact that Orwell was the model of socialist writer, he has often been disapproved for his critical attitude towards the working class. Different experts have pointed out that Orwell's personality and his sometimes-aggressive position towards the working-class snobbishness revealed that whereas he defended their values and decency, he also reproduced class prejudices against them (Ingle, 2006: 60). For some authors, although Orwell opposed intellectuals who found

proletarian manners disgusting, it was the author himself who revealed his own aversion towards the latter (Toynbee, 2002: 117).[43] As happened with other canonical intellectuals who were criticised for their own hypocrisy and contradictions, namely Sartre, Orwell's own inconsistencies lead to think that it is hard to find, in any national or historical context, the perfect intellectual systematically committed and faithful to the ideas he/she demands and free from contemporary criticism.

Orwell was the archetypal intellectual in the era of ideologies when the British people and many intellectuals took part in a passionate debate that confronted those who defended freedom and democracy, and those who supported Fascism and the spirit of British nationalism. However, the end of the war in 1945 and the dawn of the Welfare State in the 1950s signified a period of prosperity and resurgence; postwar changes and the consequent reconstruction of the nations involved in the war prompted the birth of a new society and a new cultural structure with a denoted rise of living standards, a growth of literacy rates, improvement of the economic conditions of the working class, the establishment of the state economy and the welfare state, and finally, a development of arts and culture with the new representative role of the Arts Council—exemplified in the 1951 Festival of Britain—and the role of television in the new society (Hirschkop, 2004: 456).[44]

Despite the expanse of optimism and economic growth in the new emerging culture, some sectors of the British society still remained critical of the weaknesses of the newly established system. The intellectuals of the 1950s in Britain continued with the role of nonconformist thinkers by analysing the culture they lived in and criticising the social changes and values that pervaded postwar Britain. These critical responses to society were articulated in the productions delivered by two separate groups of

[43] Orwell was particularly critical about intellectuals who defended that "all virtue resides in the proletariat [but] still take such pains to drink his soup silently" (Toynbee, 2002: 117). Orwell's critical position with regards to the middle-class intellectual—left-wing but bourgeois—was, as some critics believe, a mirroring of the author's own prejudices against the class he claimed to defend. Despite Orwell's attempts to acquire working-class habits (i.e. drinking tea with the corresponding working-class slurps), "he became upset when [Eileen] put a marmalade jar on the breakfast table. He insisted that she buy a proper pot" (Ingle, 2006: 60).

[44] As previously explained, British economist William Beveridge published the so-called Beveridge Report in 1942, thus establishing the origins of the modern welfare state: a system that helped the poor, the unemployed, and the elderly with a national health system that took care of the population. The plan was firstly implemented in 1948 under the political consensus of the Conservative leader Winston Churchill and the Labour Prime Minister Clement Atlee: "The period from 1945 to c.1973 is often described as one of 'consensus' in British politics, in which Conservative and Labour governments broadly agreed on principles of economic and social policy" (Thane, 2002: 37).

intellectuals: on the one hand, the Angry Young Men were writers, novelists, and poets who—particularly committed to the situation of the working class—constituted an intellectual literary group after the publication of a collection of essays entitled *Declaration* (1957). This publication rendered these writers' disaffection with the spirit of the times and with the British establishment, and the "angry" social realism that permeated their literary works became the distinctive trademark that identified this heterogeneous and sometimes uncoordinated group of writers (Birnbaum, 1971: 335). On the other hand, a group of academics, thinkers and cultural analysts—the cultural critics that founded what was later called the "first" New Left—joined for the publication of another collection of essays, *Conviction* (1958), in which they theorised about contemporary culture from a more philosophical, analytical and rhetorical perspective; they were also strongly influenced by socialist and Marxist ideology.

Playwright John Osborne premiered his symbolical play *Look Back in Anger* in 1956, a title that was in turn inspired by Leslie Paul's autobiography named *Angry Young Man* (1951). Osborne's play signified the origin and the literary landmark of the later rising movement of the Angry Young Men, characterised by a general discontent with the time and the writers' indignation with the apathy that was installed in postwar society, since the new class system was completely apolitical and completely indifferent to the challenges of contemporary culture.[45] Osborne's main character Jimmy Porter, annoyed by the new times of comfort and disinterest, states: "I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. […] There aren't any good, brave causes left" (Osborne, 1958: 84). *Look Back in Anger* depicted the idea that in the newborn society of the 1950s, many things had changed but still many things remained the same: "You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it" (68). It seemed that the end of the war conceived a new society that, in Osborne's view, had not overcome class attitudes in Britain. In this sense, and according to Patricia Waugh, Osborne's play "expressed the sense of cultural dislocation arising out of national decline and the

[45] Paul Bond, writing for the *World Socialist Web Site* and reporting a contemporary performance of the play *Look Back in Anger* in 1999, quotes an interesting statement from *The Daily Express* (1959): "Out of this decade has come the Illusion of Comfort, and we have lost the sense of life's difficulty" (in Bond, 1999). This middle-class comfort that was present in Osborne's play and the apparent lack of anger and passion in the society of the time recalls a contemporary pamphlet published by a French intellectual, Stephane Hessel's *Time for Outrage!* (2010) in which the author invites young people to "get angry" and complain about the injustices of the twenty-first century capitalist society. He also denounces the passivity and apathy of middle-class young people (Hessel, 2010).

renunciation of imperialist dreams after Suez, and also the class disaffections thrown up by social changes and the inadequacies of the Welfare State" (1995: 80).

The "Angries"—with writers such as Kingsley Amis, John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, John Wain, Colin Wilson, Philip Larkin and Donald Davie—echoed Osborne's literary trend of disenchanted social realism. For the Angry Young Men, the recently constituted society after the war overlooked the efforts and sacrifice of the previous generation who had fought to achieve democracy and freedom: "The Angry Young Men of the '50s belonged to a generation seemingly devoid of political interests, and the moment of their rise coincided with the deepest trough of political and spiritual apathy Britain had passed through since the end of the war" (Paul, 1965: 344). They represented the frustration of a generation uncapable of changing society. However, although these writers initially seemed to portray radical and anti-establishment attitudes, different studies suggest that the outburst of anger and outrage against the values of the recently formed society did not make these writers particularly radical or revolutionary. Whereas liberal intellectuals of the day opposed the imperialist arrogance of the government—namely the Suez crisis in 1956—the Angry Young Men were never particularly involved in the politics of the time, nor exerted a straightforward political opposition to foreign affairs. For some authors, the angry reputation of these writers was somehow magnified:

> The association between the AYM and radical political protest, which has indeed become a recurrent component in narratives built around *Look Back in Anger*, seems to have been retroactively imposed. In other words, subsequent histories have overinflated the political aspects of the Angry Young Men. (Zarhy-Levo, 2008: 41)

Moreover, other experts have pointed out that more than radicalism, the Angry Young Men spoke for the conservative values of the 1950s British society, since they exemplified "every aspect to the conservative social and political consensus of postwar England, and in this respect they suit the prevailing view of the period as one of order, harmony and accord" (Brannigan, 2002: 5). For John Brannigan, it seemed that the Angry Young Men helped create a "postwar conservatism" with reactionary comments "against women, ethnic minorities, foreigners and the poor, and promoting what became the ideological mainstays of Thatcherist conservatism in the 1980s" (2002: 24).

In 1958 and contemporaneous with the Angry Young Men, a group of intellectuals, this time academics, scholars, journalists and thinkers—many of them communists or ex-communists such as Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawm—published a collection of essays entitled *Conviction* (1958). These theorists, together with the "Angry" writers, constituted two heterogeneous and eclectic movements whose

> "Commitment" consisted of a deeply felt critique of the society and culture in which they lived, yet the orthodox political world looked dull and remote from these problems, even though it constituted the only meaningful realm for the construction of any social and cultural alternative. (Kenny, 1995: 101)

Specifically, these theorists' criticism was grounded not only on their disappointment with society, but also and mainly on a profound disenchantment with the state of socialism in postwar Britain, and more concretely with the Labour Party that was supposed to politically represent and face the challenges of the newborn culture. These theorists—articulated around two branches, the historians and the cultural analysts—conformed a social criticism of the state of the left from and within the left, and their debates and sometimes confrontations constituted a dialectic discourse upon which Cultural Marxism developed; that is, these intellectuals promoted Marxist analyses of postwar British culture demanding an early political modernisation of the left, which, in their view, needed to adapt itself to the new times. This political revisionism, that had its origins in the Communist Party Historians' Group, constituted the "first" New Left that grew later in the 1960s. This branch of the Communist Party—formed by Marxist historians such as E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, Raphael Samuel, Rodney Hilton and Christopher Hill—were, in turn, disenchanted with Stalinist Marxism after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and the constant violations of human rights by the Soviet Union (Kotkin, 2003), therefore playing an important role in the debate against both Fascism and the totalitarian Stalinist communism. They were liberal, open-minded figures that were particularly interested in the new emerging postwar culture and were conscious of the need to create a new approach to left-wing politics.

Yet, such ideological revisionism not only occurred as a consequence of these intellectuals' dissatisfaction with the Soviet Union, it also became a response to recent social transformations that had diminished the power of the Labour Party in Britain in

the 1950s. These thinkers realised that there was a need to offer a new approach to socialism that connected with a wide sector of the electorate, since the rise of living standards and the growth of the middle class had made many socialist voters move away from the Labour Party:

> The increase in living standards experienced by many working people, the access they gained to a new consumer culture and lifestyle, especially in areas of labour movement strength, and the changing patterns of work—the expansion of white-collar employment and decline of older manufacturing industries—all seemed to work against Labour. (Kenny, 1995: 123)

For these critics, the new society was in dire need of a modernisation of the ideological principles that had structured Britain during previous decades, and the New Left was the response to recent social changes. These historians therefore provided a moderate alternative between the orthodox and "corrupted" Stalinism and the growing consumerist capitalism of their societies, affording a renewed analysis of contemporary history and politics:

> The New Left constituted an intellectual milieu in which criticism of social democratic hegemony, the rise of the consumer society and the apparent incorporation of the working class around national-centrist agenda was openly articulated. Among the central themes it debated were the deformations of state bureaucracy, the Cold War, the failure of Labour to encapsulate the popular roots of ordinary culture, the anti-intellectualism of national life, and a whole range of specific issues relating to literature, theatre, cinema, modern architecture, town planning, housing and youth subcultures. […] [The New Left] did grow into an extraordinary stimulating movement that struck very precisely at critical positions in hegemonic culture and the "common sense" of the ruling power bloc. (Rojek, 2003: 27)

According to their moderate conception of Marxism, E.P. Thompson, and other writers such as John Saville, Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawm, tried to reinvent Marxist ideas to democratise and humanise communist states and communist parties (Laybourn, 2006: 76; Kenny, 1995: 15-16). As Michael Kenny put forth: "This wing of the New Left was more cautious in its ideological revisionism and more resilient in its commitment to the socialist tradition, holding firmly, in the case of Saville and Thompson, to a belief in a libertarian communism which had been displaced by Stalinist apostasy" (Kenny, 1995: 17). For Thompson specifically, "socialist humanism"

required a compound of old socialist ideals and a more humanitarian and moral approach to history and culture that distanced itself from Soviet precepts:

> It is humanist because it places once again real men and women at the centre of socialist theory and aspiration, instead of the resounding abstractions—the Party, Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, the Two Camps, the Vanguard of the Working-Class—so dear to Stalinism. It is socialist because it re-affirms the revolutionary perspectives of Communism, faith in the revolutionary potentialities not only of the Human Race or of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat but of real men and women. (Thompson, 1957: 107-108)

Thus, with the aim of sponsoring this new socialist humanism, Thompson and Saville founded the journal *The Reasoner* (later *The New Reasoner*), which turned into a room for political debate in which they expressed their views and positioned themselves as anti-Stalinist communists (Davies, 1991: 325). The journal was "devoted both to the sense of social movement and to the exploration of the political implications of a modernist culture," thus aiming to provide a theoretical space for the interpretation of culture (326).

These historians interacted with a group of cultural critics including Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, Perry Anderson, Richard Hoggart, Peter Townsend and Paul Johnson, who generated social analyses of postwar Britain and contributed to the new understanding of socialism. This new historical-cultural approach to the study of contemporary society was eventually called Cultural Marxism, which "grew out of the effort to generate a socialist understanding of postwar Britain, to grasp the significance of working-class affluence, consumer capitalism, and the greatly expanded role of the mass media in contemporary life" (Dworkin, 1997: 79). Raymond Williams, for instance, offered a cultural interpretation of left-wing revisionism, as he understood the emergence of the New Left as a consequence of a social crisis. For the author, society had evolved towards a more plural and diverse culture, which required new holistic responses to contemporary challenges, as well as a redefinition of the Marxist dogmas that had previously constituted the answer and alternative to social injustices (Davies, 1991: 329-330). In *Culture and Society* (1958), one of the early texts of the New Left, Williams pointed out: "I think a good deal of factual revision of our received cultural history is necessary and urgent, in such matters as literacy, educational levels, and the press. We also need detailed studies of the social and economic problems of current cultural expansion" (1963: 12). Later, in his *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Williams

described the current need to question the orthodox dogmas of Marxism through open-mindedness since "the central body of thinking was itself seen as active, developing, unfinished and persistently contentious" (1977: 3-4), this being the essence of the New Left's Marxist revisionism. Stuart Hall, for his part, conceived the New Left as a "third political space" between the "degeneration of the Russian Revolution" and the dominant system of "Western imperialism" (Hall, 2010: 177). The changes of the new society—mainly based on the embourgeoisement of the working classes—led this group of critics to think that the utopian socialist society was failing and a new understanding of socialism was necessary, something that was eventually proffered in some of the most important texts of the generation, such as Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957); Thompson's *The Making of the English Working class* (1963) and *Out of Apathy* (1960), and William's *Culture and Society* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961).

Similarly, and as earlier mentioned, the political branch of this ideological revisionism alleged the need to rethink the role of the Labour Party. Tony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* (1956) epitomised the theoretical rationale deployed by Hugh Gaitskell and Harold Wilson to reinterpret the function and aims of the party, and highlighted that Labour had to adapt itself to modern times resorting to social justice and equality, but also to economic growth and private enterprise—which ultimately questioned the precept of public ownership as stated in Clause IV of the party constitution. However, the New Left would, in turn, contest this political modernisation with theorists such as Thompson and Hall in the lead who were suspicious of the materialism that Crosland's revisionism concealed (Jackson, 2007: 185). As previously explained, it would be Tony Blair and his New Labour project that were in charge of implementing the long-awaited reforms of Croslandism. Whereas the New Left tried to find a middle-ground alternative between communism and Crosland's revisionism—being the latter the theoretical background used by modernising Labour leaders of the time—the *Marxism Today* writers in 1998 also fought for representing a left-wing alternative between the theoretical proposal of Anthony Giddens—that nurtured the politics of Tony Blair—and the newly established post-Thatcherite Britain.

Overall, these mentioned intellectuals reacted against the newly established transformations in Britain in the 1950s. On the one hand, the fiction writers (the Angry Young Men) provided a realist representation of the problems of the working class, thus expressing their disenchantment with the reality in which they lived, and with the apathy and the apolitical indifference of the new emerging culture. On the other hand,

the first New Left symbolised a theoretical approach to contemporary ideological changes by embodying a move away from orthodox Marxism, and expressing an early alternative, and an opposition to "the simplistic belief that capitalist collapse and proletarian triumph were guaranteed by the laws of Marxist economics" (Dworkin, 1997: 4).

The evolution of the New Left in the following decades did not abandon the committed function of these intellectuals. The upheaval of the 1960s entailed an increase of cultural and social changes in literature, art, music, film, and television, as well as other social transformations such as sexuality, feminism and pacifism. This period signified the rebellion of the young against the social norms of the establishment; it represented more a cultural revolution—that of popular culture—than a political one, inspiring writers and thinkers of the day to actively participate in contemporary cultural debates. As Patricia Waugh affirms in her study *Harvest of the Sixties* (1995), the legacy of the 1960s was not only based on the repercussion of the cultural revolution, but also on the inheritance that many authors and literary voices left behind that decade. Writers were participants of contemporary cultural changes and reacted against the established values of traditional society. Like other generations had done before, writers of this period were, as Waugh suggested, aware of their role as counter-cultural forces: "Since the industrial revolution, literature had functioned as the 'other' voice of a scientifically rationalized culture, an oppositional voice of intuition, imagination, and feeling. In the technocratic sixties, writers became intensely self-conscious of the responsibilities attached to this legacy" (1995: 58). Therefore, some fiction writers played a crucial role in the conceptualisation of the new society that was being instituted, thus exerting the political and oppositional function that was expected of the intellectual. Harold Pinter, Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing and Edward Bond were some examples of how contemporary writers used their literature and criticism to reflect upon the changing postmodern culture. Harold Pinter, for instance, was a key figure within literary activism and became a crucial participant of British political life—even until the Blair years. Still in the 1960s, he was mainly known for being a political intellectual openly committed against institutional injustices, structures of power and instances of power abuse such as the Cold War, the war in Vietnam, the Apartheid in South Africa and any kind of violation of human rights. In this sense, Patricia Waugh stated that he "has ever been an overtly political playwright: rather, one who responds to the political temper of his time" (84). Similarly, Iris Murdoch, an ex-communist who became

disappointed with totalitarian regimes, was another example of the politically committed writer at the time (Widdows, 2005: 3). In an interview, Murdoch acknowledged:

> I was a member of the Communist Party for a short time […] We believed that socialism could, and fairly rapidly, produce just and good societies, without poverty and without strife. I lost those optimistic illusions fairly soon. So I left it. But it was just as well, in a way, to have seen the inside of Marxism because then one realises how strong and how awful it is, certainly in its organised form. (1990)

Likewise, Doris Lessing also flirted with left-wing ideals and communism. Her prolific career—that started in the 1950s and went on until the early 2000s before she died in 2013—entailed sharp analyses of contemporary society and the transformations of Britain during subsequent decades. Among her most emblematic works of this period were *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), in which Lessing expressed her disenchantment with politics—and more concretely with the Stalinist communism that had already disillusioned the writers of the New Left. In an interview, Lessing confessed her disappointment with the Soviet regime: "I left the party (in the 1950s) when everybody else did, as it became evident that the Soviet Union was a very bad place" (2006). Also, in another interview the author admitted her disappointment with communism: "We were mad. We genuinely believed that sort of like 15 years after the war, Paradise would reign in the world, you know, Utopia. Everything bad would be banished, you know, capitalism, and that cruelty, and the unkindness to children, and unkindness to women, and you name it. And we believed this rubbish" (2003). Later novels such as *The Good Terrorist* (1985), set in the Thatcherite Britain of the 1980s, also portrayed a society disillusioned with communism in general, and with the Labour Party in particular.

In this context of social convulsion and committed writing, the *New Left Review* (NLR) appeared as the journal of reference for a theoretical approach to cultural and political analyses of the time, and represented an opportunity to guide and canalise the anti-capitalist struggles of the left. Born out of the fusion of two preceding left-wing journals intimately linked to the New Left, *The New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review*, the journal gave room for liberal intellectuals—such as Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, Ralph Miliband, Raphael Samuel, and Tom Nairn—to debate about politics, economics, popular culture and theory (feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis). Edited by

Stuart Hall at its foundation, the journal reflected its affinity for working-class protests, as its early contributors had a strong "working-class consciousness instilled by the expansion of technical or 'intellectual' labour" (Thompson, 2007: 4-6). However, internal differences within the journal generated a schism between two stools: those of the first New Left that preferred to work in a political direction, and those who preferred to abandon the journal's commitment to the political movement in order to approach it to a more "self-consciously intellectual role" (6-10). Perry Anderson's editorship from 1962 disassociated the journal from its predecessors: whereas the first New Left of Stuart Hall defended the need to work within the confines of the Labour Party, the second New Left considered this loyalty a form of "incorporation and subordination" (18). Anderson consequently directed the journal towards a more internationalist and theoretical position, as well as a philosophical and sociological one so that it mirrored, to some extent, the identity of the admired *Les Temps Modernes*. The journal "was preparing the theoretical ground for 'revolution'" by spreading European Marxist ideas and translations of Antonio Gramsci, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Louis Althusser, and Jean-Paul Sartre (Collini, 2010: 10). The NLR was not only influenced by continental Marxism, but also by the convulsive popular atmosphere of the 1960s in Europe, and more concretely, the symbolic student mobilisations of 1968 in France, an event that actually radicalised the position of the NLR and approached it to the revolutionary left (Thompson, 2007: 48).

By 1968, the war in Vietnam, the growing anti-imperialism, racial movements in America, the events of May 1968 in France and the anti-Stalinist Prague Spring caused an atmosphere of generalised revolution that excited many of the NLR intellectuals (Palmer, 2008: 45). However, in light of the internationalist direction the journal had taken under Anderson, the first New Left acknowledged that the journal was not representative of its political voice as particularly British and opposed to both Stalinism and capitalism, this being the reason why a group of intellectuals joined in a common manifesto to direct their social and political criticism at the British context, and convincingly articulate their disenchantment with the Labour government of Harold Wilson which had arrived in power in 1964. This attempt to recover the original political voice of the first New Left eventually took shape in the publication of the *May Day Manifesto* in 1967-68. The text was initially published in 1967 and edited by Stuart Hall, Edward Thompson and Raymond Williams, but a second and concluding version was finally published in 1968. As Michael Rustin explains in a contemporary edition of

the text, the *May Day Manifesto* was signed by more than seventy writers, academics and activists who urged to take political action in the face of recent historical and social changes, such as capitalism, the new imperialism, and the Cold War (2013: viii). Yet, these intellectuals aimed at reassessing their opposition not only to capitalism in general, but also to the modernisation of the Wilson government that had accepted the dominant capitalist structure in detriment of social services (vi). Contrarily, these intellectuals defended a more "democratic, egalitarian and humane system" (xvi).

Despite the agitated years of the 1960s and the inescapably visible presence of committed writers, critic Anthony Hartley contributed to the analysis of the condition of English intellectuals. In his sceptical work *A State of England* (1963), the author stressed the profound intellectual decadence of British society in which writers and thinkers of the time were characterised by "their inadequacies in Britain's present condition—for their parochialism, nostalgia, sentimentality, delusive pride, intellectual self-indulgence, and much else" (Hoggart, 1964). The author criticised that liberal and progressive intellectuals—and those who defended nuclear disarmament and demanded an expansion of education for children of all social classes—fell into "simple disobedience" by sitting down in Trafalgar Square (1964). Hartley observed an evident disenchantment with contemporary thinkers and a perceived nostalgia for the real intellectual of the 1930s. In this sense, the critic defended the crucial role of the intellectual in his duty to analyse society and "realize that they cannot escape responsibility for the past or the future of their country" (Hartley, 1963: 240). In this way, Hartley's pessimistic vision regarding British intelligentsia reinforced the inferiority complex that the British writer had had in relation to the French prototype:

> I must confess that the great majority of what may be called "liberal intellectuals" seem to me to have forgotten the lesson of the thirties and to have cut themselves off from reality in a way which anyone acquainted with the utterances of French intellectuals over the last ten years will find all too familiar. (238-239)

Thus, Hartley's discouraging views with regards to the state of British intellectuals recall the never-ending debate of contemporary societies that undervalue the role of their intellectuals and compare them with an apparently idealised past in which old writers and thinkers used to perform the function of authentic intellectuals through a more truthful and radical commitment. As will be analysed in the following chapters of this dissertation, the fateful, and still current perception that the real

intellectual is disappearing was persistent throughout several decades of the twentieth century, and the perspective of the twenty-first century intellectual will be, as later shown, equally negative. For Hartley, those romanticised intellectuals of the 1930s did not deserve comparison with the decadent state of the British intelligentsia in the 1960s, and yet, the same perception still prevails in the twenty-first century when contemporary intellectuals are often compared with other committed voices of the past. In this respect, intellectuals have never been perfect and have rarely fulfilled the expectations that they raise in societies; still and all, it is necessary to consider the evolution of these thinkers in their historical context, as they have responded in diverse manners to the challenges of different cultural, political and social conjunctures.

All in all, despite critical views such as Hartley's, the 1960s was also a decade of political writing in which different authors—either the theoretical writers of the *New Left Review* and the *May Day*, or fiction writers such as Harold Pinter and Iris Murdoch—used their works to respond to the challenges of history and the new conditions of British society. Generally speaking, these writers and critics contributed to the political debates of the time exerting the role of the committed intellectual by getting involved in the relevant issues of the day, and opposing what they thought to be the social injustices of the new emerging capitalism.

After the turbulent years of the 1960s, the 1970s appeared as the bridge between the liberalism of the previous decade and the conservatism of the 1980s. As earlier illustrated, British society had seen a rise in living standards, the embourgeoisement of the working class, and the ascent of several anti-mainstream factions that questioned the values and beliefs of postwar Britain. In this context, the coming era began to institutionalise the political and cultural patterns of the new economic system:

> In the post-war world, it is the late sixties and seventies which give birth to much of what we recognise as contemporary culture: a commodified counter-culture; identity politics; the celebration of popular culture and its recycling of materials; suspicion of authority and political process. (Armstrong, 2004: 585)

During the 1970s, in the face of a global disenchantment with Stalinist communism and a Labour Party that began to accept the rule of the emerging capitalism, it seemed that the Marxist dogma entered into crisis while "capitalism was ideologically ascendant" (Palmer, 2008: 45-46). Thus, counter-hegemonic movements exerted a critical and challenging social function especially with regards to a nascent neo-

conservative economy that implemented anti-social and anti-labour reforms and consequently infuriated many sectors of British society.[46]

However, generalised discontent with Marxism as an oppositional force materialised in different intellectual manifestations. On the one hand, intellectual culture of the 1970s decentralised its activity in different publications. Although the New Left still interacted with the political reality of the time, the crucial role of the *New Left Review* commenced to recede with many contributors now writing for other journals. Anderson's NLR developed an internationalist approach to politics and Marxism while disregarding local political, economic and social problems in Britain: the journal's theoretical debates focused, first of all, on the exploration of new marginal theories—Marxist feminism, ethnic and racial studies, youth movements, nationalism, class and subcultures (Davies, 1991: 327-333); and secondarily, the journal continued the theoretical debate of the state of the left, and more concretely, the state of communism and communist parties worldwide. Although still faithful to classical Marxism, the journal acknowledged that Leninism was not applicable to Western Europe and questioned whether revolutionary communism was appropriate under conditions of advanced capitalism as a way to achieve a democratic socialism (Thompson, 2007: 82-84). The NLR became subsequently aware of the lack of responses from the European left and acknowledged the absence of a revolutionary strategy that could face the challenges of capitalism (81).

On the other hand, the literary sphere also contributed to depict and criticise the newly constituted culture, thus focusing on exclusively British-based social issues. To begin with, political theatre grew into an iconic means to express not only the social instability of those years (strikes, the Irish Troubles, anarchism and other subculture movements), but also the writers' disenchantment with contemporary Marxism as the ideological source and effective weapon to combat capitalism. For instance, the provocative theatre of Howard Brenton, and his *Weapons of Happiness* (1976) in particular, illustrated the stormy and unstable London of the day, which was plagued

[46] The early 1970s were characterised by worsening of labour relations and turbulent strikes, such as the one led by the National Union of Mineworkers that caused the collapse of the Conservative government of Edward Heath in 1974 (Parker, 2012: 2). Subsequent Labour governments of Harold Wilson in 1974 and James Callaghan in 1976 had also begun to slightly accept the structures of capitalism in detriment of Labour's traditional social doctrine: Callaghan's government, for instance, was forced to cut public expenditure on social welfare, health, housing and education in order to receive a loan from the International Monetary Fund (Shepherd, 2013: 118). As will be demonstrated, for some writers of the time, the British left had gradually abandoned its radicalism.

with early privatisations and subsequent turbulent strikes. In Brenton's play, the ghost of a Czech victim of the Soviet Union participated in a London factory strike where there was little left of the "original socialist idealism" (Billington, 2008: 32). For Brenton, "radical change can only be achieved through organisation" and the young British strikers in the play were just "undisciplined potato crisp revolutionaries" (32). In retrospect, Brenton has often commented on his disillusion with socialism; as the author himself admitted in an interview for *The Guardian*:

> I thought Russia was going to reform. I thought the Soviet Union was going to turn itself inside out and that an extraordinary social democratic force was going to emerge […] My hopes were an illusion, and that depressed me. I felt, along with many others, that the socialist idea died in this Russian autocratic mess. Russia had appropriated the whole project, tyrannized it, distorted it, and then failed to make it work. (2006)

Likewise, political playwright David Hare portrayed the social decadence of the decade: "Hare's plays provided visual symbols which conveyed with theatrical vitality the moral dilemmas of living in a corrupt and degenerate society" (Waugh, 1995: 170-171). Hare's play *Plenty* (1978) depicted the disillusion and the frustrated expectations that emerged in the aftermath of the war, such as the question of the empire and the egalitarian ideals of the postwar generation. In the play, the protagonist Susan Traherne, disappointed with the Second World War's "heroic values of the Resistance," now lived in a declining England "that has lost its moral rudder" (Rich, 1982: C3).

Moreover, socialist playwright Trevor Griffiths also vindicated the revolutionary road of left-wing organisations that aimed to become oppositional forces in society. Griffiths's writings consequently showed "his lifelong commitment to the socialist cause in England, his exploration of the contradictions inherent in revolutionary politics, and his own struggles as a radical writer working within a capitalist system" (O'Connor, 2001: 113). The writer became a committed conscience that understood political writing as the most effective manner to denounce the growing conservative hegemony (113). Among Griffiths's many political plays of the 1970s, perhaps there are three main works that stand out: *Occupations* (1972), *The Party* (1974) and *Comedians* (1976).

David Edgar, also a political playwright for more than four decades, was particularly active in the 1970s. Considered a public intellectual, he engaged "in depth with a wide variety of political issues through newspaper opinion pages, journal essays,

and book reviews, as well as via frequent public speaking engagements before a variety of organisations" (Reinelt and Hewitt, 2011: 1). He was "a central figure in British public life, particularly with regard to the relationships among the arts, government, and society" (1). Politically committed to the left and defined by himself as Marxist, he declared:

> In the early 70s, I and hundreds of other political playmakers saw ourselves primarily as servicing agents of the then vibrant and robust labour movement. Out task, we felt, was to present a socialist analysis in an entertaining and accessible way, to perform the literal function of a living newspaper, a leaflet standing up. (Edgar, 1983: 44)

Edgar believed that political theatre "should be not to evade but to confront the knotty and disturbing questions which now face the Left and the labour movement as a whole" (44). He attempted to portray the failure of ideologies, the decline of the left and the rise of pre-Thatcherite conservatism in his plays. Concretely *Destiny* (1976) analysed the question of the empire, as well as issues on nationalism and racism, and predicted a rising tendency of a moderate Fascism in the late twentieth century. As some critics suggest, Edgar portrayed the "fascist repressed sentiments of the postimperial condition" (Reinelt and Hewitt, 2011: 110). His later play *Maydays* (1983) was also a portrait of the state of socialism in the 1980s, thus presenting the success and failure of the left in general, and the Labour Party in particular in postwar Britain.

From the British intellectuals of the 1970s—both theorists and political playwrights—it can be inferred, as remarked above, a generalised subversion of trust in Marxist ideology. The rising expansion of the capitalist dogma, that even swayed the leaders of the Labour Party, revealed that the left had stopped being an oppositional response to the mainstream system. The victory of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 confirmed the crisis of the left, the deterioration of the New Left intelligentsia, and the consequent triumph of the Thatcherite philosophy. The new Prime Minister's governmental style generated a global political and cultural transformation, and her reforms in the Conservative Party as well as in the country as a whole introduced and standardised a new approach to politics and economy; that is, the neoliberal model that endorsed meritocracy, business, the market state and the creation of wealth instead of redistribution. Additionally, her political measures towards privatisation, her opinionated character, and the reduction of public spending on health, education, arts

and culture provoked a widespread hostility and numerous social protests. On the opposition, the Labour Party and the Social Democratic Party tried to oppose Thatcher's strong convictions and controversial reforms that yielded social instability and constant political unrest.[47] Similarly, trade unions, miners, public employees, left-wing sectors, local governments, journalists, unemployed, ethnic minorities, feminists, the arts sphere, the church and the intellectuals were, among others, the dissident forces that tried, sometimes unsuccessfully, to counteract the Thatcherite establishment (Fernández Sánchez, 1999b: 194).

Thus, Thatcherism became not only a political project, it became the project, the single answer and alternative that could respond and give sense to all the problems of everyday life (Davies, 1991: 339). It seemed that liberal intelligentsia now lacked a forceful proposal that could beat the hegemonic discourse of Thatcherism: on the one hand, the heirs of the New Left could not offer a political alternative, nor a convincing formulation of a new economic project. The writers that had previously contributed to the NLR soon focused their oppositional discourses on the American empire and the established capitalism, yet they could not but "acknowledge the dramatic transformations of that decade, including the end of 'actually existing socialism'" (Collini, 2010: 10). Classical Marxism had therefore suffered an abrupt collapse, and the great thinkers of past decades were now unable to offer an ideological spur, or a coherent programme capable of fulfilling the needs of the recently established system (Thompson, 2007: 107). By the mid 1980s, many members of the NLR editorial committee resigned due to internal divisions, and the new revisionism was grouped around a new emerging magazine, *Marxism Today* (123). After the fall of communism, the left was psychologically debilitated and although Thatcherism caused a social crisis deep enough to raise opposition on the part of rebellious intellectuals, it seemed that they lacked an ideological backup that legitimised their demands:

> It was constrained by the receding politico-intellectual hairline of the Left, which in an age of Stalinist collapse showed few signs of new Marxist growth. Anderson and the NLR seemed to have less and less of the revolutionary resolve that had characterised their earlier project. (Palmer, 2008: 45-46)

[47] Some dissident members of the Labour Party founded the Social Democratic Party in 1981, such as Roy Jenkins, David Owen and Shirley Williams.

By the end of the 1980s, Stuart Hall's emblematic book *Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (1989) eventually acknowledged, as will be deeply analysed in later chapters of this dissertation, the decadence of left-wing intellectuals who could not provide an answer and alternative to the dominant project of Margaret Thatcher (see chapter five, 5.1).

On the other hand, while the theoretical left found itself in clear devolution, "in Thatcher's time, the British novel enjoyed a comparatively lively resurgence" (McEwan, 2013). Thatcher's recognised anti-intellectualism—which bluntly disregarded the relevance of culture and art—incited the angry opposition of the literary and artistic intelligentsia that denounced Thatcher's authoritarian reforms; the new world that was constituted under Thatcher thus "lured many writers into opposition" (2013). Authors such as Margaret Drabble, Ian McEwan, Hanif Kureishi, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, Carmen Callil, John Le Carré, and Tom Sharpe, and filmmakers, such as Terry Jones, Stephen Frears and Mike Leigh, reacted in different ways to the loss of social values, the end of the welfare consensus, and severe adjustments in the economy that left the poorer unprotected. The Troubles in Northern Ireland, for instance, motivated the political commitment of some intellectuals as reflected in their narratives, such was the case of Seamus Heaney's poetry collections *North* (1975) and *Station Island* (1984), which dealt with national identities and attacked the imperialist English discourse. Although Heaney did not consider himself a political poet: "I don't think I'm a political poet with political themes and a specifically political understanding of the world" (1997: 88), he also acknowledged: "I am certainly a person with an Ireland-centered view of politics. I would like our understanding and our culture and our language and our confidence to be Ireland-centered rather than England-centered or American-centered" (88). The author eventually declared that he believed in the political responsibility of the poet (88).

Other writers portrayed the state of England in their novels, such was the case of David Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988), one of the author's campus novels that was used to depict the British academy and British society as a whole (Tripney, 2011: 49). As Thatcher's cuts in public services dominated the deteriorated atmosphere of the country, Lodge reviewed, through the misfortunes of his characters, the gloomy state of contemporary industrial England, and the consequences of the established capitalism (Quinlan, 1990: 464). Also against capitalism, *enfant terrible* Martin Amis made a scathing criticism of the society of the time in his reputed novel *Money* (1984) where he

blamed the liberal sixties for representing the origins of the neo-conservative monetarist economy: "Amis condemned the moral laxity and complacency of liberal culture as much as the heartlessness of commercial enterprise and showed how the inadequacies of the former had led to the triumphs of the latter" (Waugh, 1995: 31). In the novel, Amis examined the cultural signification of capitalism, which diminished human values and morality, and incited people's ambitions by tempting the dark side of humankind: "I think money is the central deformity in life. […] It's one of the evils that has cheerfully survived identification as an evil […] it's a fiction, an addiction, and a tacit conspiracy that we have all agreed to go along with" (Amis in Diedrick, 2004: 74).

Public cuts under Thatcher and the new emerging atmosphere of business competition provoked the reaction of other thinkers and writers—like Angus Wilson, Margaret Drabble, and Ian McEwan—who believed that the new political scene of England would cause the end of liberty, creativity and tolerance (Fernández Sánchez, 1999b: 202). Wilson was, for example, a strong defender of the welfare state and became one of the most committed intellectuals against Thatcherism and against the Prime Minister's conservatism in public services. Likewise, Margaret Drabble, who was another representative writer within the broad spectrum of oppositional figures under Thatcher's politics, examined the social, economic and political changes of Great Britain in her novels. For Drabble, the 1980s pictured a "mad" society "because of a polarization between the rich and the poor, closure of industries and withdrawal of educational provision" (Tapaswi, 2004: 72). In *The Radiant Way* (1987), Drabble's symbolic social and political novel of the decade, the author expressed her views on the consequences of Thatcherism. In an interview at that time, she declared: "What Margaret Thatcher has been trying to do is to shift us into an anti-welfare, anti-public spending economy. […] Today we have a high unemployment rate in England and this has been used as an instrument in policy by the Thatcher government to keep wage claims down and keep inflation down. I think that is immoral" (Drabble, 1987). Similarly, Ian McEwan, among other left-wing writers, was openly suspicious of Thatcher's authority (Brooker, 2010: 52) and criticised the reforms that were implemented during those years in Britain—namely the change of mentality that Thatcherism instigated. On this point, the author recently acknowledged: "We have paid for that transformation with a world that is harder-edged, more competitive, and certainly more intently aware of the lure of cash. We might now be taking stock, post credit crunch, of our losses and gains since the 1986 deregulation of the City, but it is

doubtful that we will ever undo her legacy" (McEwan, 2013). Specifically of that decade, McEwan's novel *The Child in Time* (1987) depicted the unquestioned hegemony of Thatcher's government and painted a dystopian portrait of the Prime Minister under whom "notions of public welfare have succumbed to the dominant culture of enterprise and profit" (Spice, 1987: 8). McEwan's criticism of the state of public services, health, education, and housing, and the uselessness of the Parliamentary opposition illustrated the "awfulness" of Thatcherism (8).

As shown in the examples above, for the most part of the Thatcher years many of these counter-power intellectuals exerted their opposition individually. It would be during the second half of the 1980s when organised and structured dissidence materialised, and intellectuals began to coordinate protests, manifestos and collective statements against the government. Ian McEwan and Margaret Drabble, with other writers such as Harold Pinter, John Mortimer, David Hare, Michael Holroyd, Angela Carter and Salman Rushdie constituted what became to be known as the 20 June Discussion Group in the summer of 1986. They were, as Toby Young described, "the crème-de-la-crème of London's literary establishment" who met to organise a course to overthrow Margaret Thatcher (Young, 2013). They were a group of liberal, mostly left-wing writers who intended to create an "Arts/Politics discussion group" at Antonia Fraser's house (Fraser, Antonia 2010: 153), and whose main aim was to consider "the meaning of political action" and "help the working class to escape from restrictions" (154). Yet, the diversity of backgrounds and intellectual interests (philosophical, literary and political) made the group soon vanish (154), which raised significant criticism on the writers' part, for it seemed that the oppositional left and its dissident action was divided and proved inconclusive.

Later in 1988, another group of progressive intellectuals joined in the so-called *Charter 88* movement, a signature petition that configured the intellectuals' attempts to organise themselves and constitute a collective dissenting force (Fernández Sánchez, 1999b: 221). The document was signed by intellectual and artists such as Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, Bernard Crick, Margaret Drabble, Terry Eagleton, John Fowles, Stephen Frears, Stuart Hall, Richard Hoggart, Hanif Kureishi, David Lodge, Ian McEwan, Harold Pinter and Salman Rushdie, among many others (224-225). These participants claimed that democracy had been devalued under Thatcher and the government had spoiled the welfare consensus established in the aftermath of the Second World War. *Charter 88* was the attempt of left-wing intellectuals to express

their disaffection with the government and demand the Prime Minister's resignation, the protection of civil rights and individual freedoms, a more exhaustive legislative control on government, a reform of the electoral system based on proportional representation, and a democratic non-hereditary second chamber in Parliament (Riddell, 2007: 36).

Broadly speaking, the intensity of Thatcher's reforms in the 1980s had serious consequences for the British society: they worsened the standards of living of ample sectors of society, instituted a mercantilist mentality, damaged democratic institutions and reduced public benefits, all of which increased a clash of interests between the government and the British people, and instigated a strong popular and intellectual opposition with few antecedents in Britain. Despite some accusations against the British intelligentsia that stressed its uselessness, anachronism, and lack of political commitment, the decade would be remembered for being principally a turbulent era characterised by the British writers' denunciation of the government's measures. The British intelligentsia of the 1980s undoubtedly became the historical and emblematic enemy of the Thatcherite project.

When on 22 November 1990 Margaret Thatcher left the government, her successor John Major led the moderate-conservative version of the already established neoliberal state. Major carried out insignificant issues and reforms, such as the debate on the British national identity, Britain's relationship with Europe, and other minor reforms in the economy and public services that contributed to the perception of the government as the mild version of its predecessor. This appeared to soften discontent and the energy of dissident forces that fought against institutions of power; such was the case of the Labour Party which, having lost four general elections and being consigned to form a never-ending shadow cabinet, did not represent a forceful and meaningful political alternative to the Tories.

Moreover, culture and the arts abandoned the counter-hegemonic role that had previously identified artists and intellectuals as contestants of power and suddenly appeared allied with it. Major's new approach to the realm of knowledge began to be particularly amiable at least with a sector of the British intellectuals: whereas under Thatcher the world of culture and intelligentsia epitomised the dissident force against the government, under Major culture was now institutionalised and protected. The constitution of the Department of National Heritage (DNH)—evidently associated with a conservative British past of castles, country houses and cricket—subsidised national culture and legitimised a sector of the British arts (Luckhurst, 2005: 79). This renewed

the interest in middlebrow artists such as Rudyard Kipling, Edward Elgar and Anthony Trollope, as the overall aim was to gain support from the cultural spheres that had formerly entailed the most radical opposition to the Thatcher government: "Across different cultural arenas, the opposition that had characterised the 1980s began to dissolve into forms of complicity with the dominant culture" (80).

The new affable attitude of the Prime Minister did not inspire the intellectuals' outrage, which soothed the insurgent voices that had framed the political insurgence of earlier decades: "The wounds have been staunched with remarkable speed. The intellectuals who abused Mrs Thatcher heap gratitude on her successor, and seem less serious as a result […] British intellectuals have returned to where they are more at home, cultivating their garden" (Young, 1993: 114). It seemed that there were no reasons to revolt, "because the challenge has softened, so has the response" (113). Despite the generalised perception of failure and decay within the British society after the Thatcher years, the Major government made no boisterous reforms, there was no energy left to counterattack what seemed to be the natural party of government, and society—which was now politically appeased after the storm—began to show signs of recovery:

> But the Nineties are not a time for outrage. The Eighties had many faults, but at least they were a time when outrage was in fashion. There was some equivalence between the scale of the problems and the emotional energy that confronted them on every side. (117)

3.3 INTELLECTUALS AND THE ARTS UNDER NEW LABOUR

There seems to exist agreement on the fact that the last decade of the twentieth century, despite a brief period of economic recession, was an overall era of extended welfare, cultural prosperity, overwhelming consumerism, and homogeneity in popular tastes. The 1990s was the latest decade of pop music and pop art *par excellence*, with fashion, magazines and celebrities at the foreground of popular culture, football, television and media (with reality shows such as *Big Brother*), films (trivial romantic comedies starring Hugh Grant and René Zellweger), and technology and science (the rise of the Internet in communications) among other phenomena that defined cultural

contemporaneity in banal, mundane, and sometimes artificially inauthentic terms. Society had changed and the growth of the middle class signified the dissemination of mainstream culture with an increase of living standards and a carefree attitude that distanced the British people from a previous politicised society. Youth culture was particularly distinctive of these years, for the young became affluent consumers of fashion, music, and art, and became the engine that inspired not only the production, but also the consumption of British creative industries. In this context, youth culture played an essential role in, and became the economic driving force behind the modernisation of national and social identity, as there existed the belief that the creative industries were the source of economic development and growth during this decade: "Creativity, innovation, and risk are general necessities for both economic and cultural enterprise, where knowledge and ideas drive both wealth creation and social modernisation" (Hartley, 2005: 1).

"Cool Britannia" was therefore the catchphrase used to attract youngsters to a political national rejuvenation that linked the recently created political project of New Labour with a new wave of youth culture and artistic movements. The Labour Party's efforts to identify with the young formed part of a political strategy of modernisation that started in 1994 when Tony Blair was elected leader of Labour. As earlier mentioned, this modernising process began with Blair's attempts to change the political and ideological direction of the party ("the Third Way") so as to make it electable and win the next general election in 1997; yet, the ideological modernisation was also intimately linked to a renovation of the party's image, and by extension, of the whole national identity that projected Britain as a twenty-first century nation. The party, and more concretely, Blair's discourse reinforcing the notions of "youth" and "newness" was utilised to detach the new era from a decadent past—mostly associated with Thatcher's political legacy characterised by social conflicts, poverty and unemployment—but also determined by a frustrated past of Labourism that had lost up to four general elections since 1979.

The enthusiasm of the 1990s embodied the British dream in its social, cultural and political shapes, which could be seen through the high hopes of the new Labour leader and a new successful cultural and consumerist movement. The abatement of the Thatcher years and the decline in Tory supremacy that took place during the 1990s caused the perfect environment for collective optimism, an enthusiasm that called for new social values intimately connected to a new national and political identity. London

specifically became the cultural landmark of this modernisation, it became the urban symbol of modernity used to stress what "Cool Britannia" represented, that is, an era of fashion and cultural blooming that was often compared to the Swinging London of the 1960s (see Wallace, 1997; McGuire and Elliott, 1996).

In this context of social and cultural excitement, Blair established a new relationship with culture and the arts that was apparently positive during the first years of New Labour. First of all, several key exhibitions inaugurated the boom of contemporary art: in 1997 the Royal Academy Exhibition *Sensation*, and the 1999 Saatchi Gallery Exhibition *Neurotic* boasted of an "unprecedented financial success" (Marwick, 2000: 378-379). Brit Art, and the Young British Artists (YBAs) with Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Jake & Dinos Chapman, Marcus Harvey and Sarah Lucas, among other rebellious and transgressive artists, participated in this phenomenon that was identified with a boom of cultural and artistic creativity, but that was also associated with an anti-intellectual "avant-gardism that was evacuated from any political sense" (Luckhurst, 2005: 81). British films were also promoted with the introduction of tax concessions achieving international interest (*Braveheart*, 1995; *Trainspotting*, 1996; *The World is not Enough*, 1999; *Shakespeare in Love*, 1998; *Bridget Jones's Diary* in 2001; and *Notting Hill*, in 1999), and British opera and theatre also started to enjoy a hopeful age (Marwick, 2000: 379).

Secondly, and as will be extensively explained in chapter six of this dissertation, pop music, later rebranded as Britpop, became the artistic symbol of cultural consumerism in Britain. Led by bands such as *Blur* and *Oasis*, of middle and working-class origins, Britpop represented the symbol of the new British fashion and a rebranded national identity:

> Britpop artists encouraged that feeling, some messianically presenting themselves as saviours of a corrupted national aesthetic. Like most artists at any time they exaggerated the extent to which an inadequate culture required an injection of their genius; Oasis performed their first single on *Top of the Pops* in front of an image of the Union Jack disappearing down a plughole, which illustrated their view that they had arrived to rescue it. (Weight, 2013: 323)

Other bands like *Radiohead*, *Pet Shop Boys*, *Supergrass*, *Pulp*, *Take That* and the *Spice Girls* embodied the trifling consumerist culture that was in turn representative of an emerging young and well-off middle class that could afford to spend money in

consumer goods. These bands would represent, broadly speaking, the banality of the 1990s reality, the acceptance of the mainstream culture with an apparent political passivity, and the supremacy of meaningless presentation within a free-time aesthetics. Michael Bracewell defined the Britpop phenomenon as follows:

> BritPop put forward a pop ethos that Blur summed up in the title of their CD, *Modern Life is Rubbish*. With a founding theology of apolitical infantilism, the movement had distanced itself from both the multiculturalism of dance music and the white nihilism of grunge's screamed de profundis from the teenage bedrooms of middle-class America. What BritPop promised, with a disingenuous simplicity that belied its subtle protest, were some catchy tunes and a rattling good time. (2002: 17)

Bracewell followed to claim that, even though some Britpop singers—such as Noel Gallagher—early supported the emergent New Labour,[48] it seemed that the political commitment of these artists had nothing to do with the retro political heroism of the previous decade. For Bracewell, *Oasis*'s empty and meaningless songs such as *Don't Look Back in Anger*, and *Be Here Now* could not be compared with nostalgic songs like *Imagine* by John Lennon; the 1990s were not a time for anger, they were not even a time for content, but for a snobbish glamour:

> Rooted in the past but sniping at the present, BritPop made its political points by never referring to politics. Noel or Damon might offer a cursory nod to New Labour, but there was none of the community knees-up and flag-waving which had typified the politicized pop events laid on by Red Wedge or Rock Against Racism during the early years of the 1980s. (18)

Gallagher himself, despite his initial political commitment, acknowledged that even celebrities were more attractive to people than politicians. For Gallagher, and after his disenchantment with New Labour, there was no one left to vote for in contemporary politics: "So I don't really think there's anything left to vote for. That's why people don't vote […] why people would rather vote for celebrity talent shows than would vote for politics" (BBC, 2007b).

[48] As will be analysed in chapter six, Noel Gallagher supported New Labour in its rise to Downing Street. The Gallagher brothers' working-class upbringing in Manchester and their labourite background made them support the new Labour Prime Minister, yet, despite Noel's initial support to Blair—he was even invited by Blair to a cocktail party at Downing Street in 1997 after the elections—he later became disappointed with New Labour.

However, despite the seeming depoliticisation of the arts in 1997, still many artists and intellectuals supported Labour in their hope that a change of government would improve the arts' decadent situation during the last two previous decades, and would overcome Thatcher's confrontational legacy with the British intelligentsia. This antagonistic relationship of Thatcherism with artists and intellectuals was the motivating element that inspired Blair to increase New Labour's prestige and legitimise his project by winning these voices on his side. With this aim in mind Blair announced: "The role of intellectuals and thinkers is crucial to changing the political climate. It is in fact critical to the regeneration of politics. I want Labour to be able to draw on a coalition of thinkers, including people outside the party" (1996: 16). As will be explained later on, many of these artists and intellectuals welcomed Blair's new leadership with optimism, and even despite certain suspicion on Blair's revisionist modernisation, they generally praised the arrival of a Labour government. Britpop would represent the symbolic referent for explaining how arts were utilised in favour of Blair's project, and how they soon became disenchanted when they realised that Blair's promises to favour these creative industries were rapidly forgotten and ignored.

Additionally, as happened with the arts, Blair also encouraged British intellectuals to support his cause. As will be subsequently mentioned, in 1996 Blair organised a private meeting with several reputed British intellectuals—those belligerent sectors that had previously smeared the reputation of Thatcher's reforms—so as to win approval and legitimisation for his project and win, consequently, the coming general election. However, in this context of intellectual support for Tony Blair at the dawn of New Labour, there were other intellectual figures who distrusted the new young and attractive Prime Minister-to-be, and considered the position of those who actually believed in the New Labour project as naïve and too supportive of power instead of being critical and oppositional to it. Andrew Marr, in a column for *The Independent* in 1996 pointed out that "there isn't, frankly, the fizzing, brick-throwing atmosphere of the anti- establishment Thatcherite intellectuals of 20 years ago. There is, instead, a calm self-confidence which is itself rather striking" (Marr, 1996c: 17). In this sense, those "cautious" intellectuals who were suspicious of Blair's project foresaw that his plans for modernisation were directing the party towards the centre-right. Marr already glimpsed in 1996, before Blair came into power, that he was not as "modern" as he aspired to be, for there existed early instincts that Blair intended to reproduce certain conservative measures: "In some areas, such as health, aspects of education and the economy, this

shows how far Conservative thinking has won through" (17). Despite this incipient conservatism, it seemed that Blair's New Labourism was the decaffeinated version of previous conservative governments, which did not inspire intellectuals and thinkers to react against an apparently "friendly" authority, and were instead complicit with it.

Both suspicion and support at the rise of New Labour did not last for long. As will be detailed in the following chapters of this dissertation, shortly after Blair entered Number 10 and as his early reforms began to be released, many of these intellectuals criticised Blair's modernisation and the new conservative direction the party was taking. On the one hand, writers—novelists and playwrights who had not been particularly concerned about politics during the most part of the 1990s—began to depict with satirical humour the early modernisation carried out by the new Labour leader. These reactions were now particularly critical about Blair's modernising project and his emerging conservatism.[49]

Margaret Drabble, Julian Barnes and Martin Amis were among those who portrayed the ideological transformation of the party and the excessive emphasis given to the creation of an attractive image that truly disguised the new ideological direction of the party. Other writers such as Harold Pinter or Fay Weldon stressed their disenchantment with Blair's neoliberal approach to economics and public services, and his emerging ambition in foreign affairs that led to reinforce Britain's special relationship with the United States. With regards to this, Blair's war in Iraq elicited the writers' criticism either individually in their novels, essays and plays, or in collective association signing petitions against the invasion. Writers such as Ian McEwan, Sue Townsend, Robert Harris, and Harold Pinter, among many others, contributed to the representation, sometimes with sharp criticism, of the government's manipulation to gain support for the war. Additionally, newspapers and websites functioned as a political stand for groups of writers and thinkers to collectively denounce what they considered to be an imperialist and undemocratic war—such was the role of the website *openDemocracy* in 2003. At this point, political satire became particularly inquisitive with Blair's decisions. Sue Townsend's novels focused on the circumstances that

[49] Fiction in the 1990s responded to millennial anxieties such as the end of the Cold War, the end of ideology, developments of science and technology and identity politics of the *fin de siècle*—class, race, sexuality and nation (Bentley, 2005: 6-11). Writers such as Martin Amis, J.G. Ballard and Will Self explored the Zeitgeist of the period, and historiographic narratives by Kazuo Ishiguro, Julian Barnes, Ian McEwan and A.S. Byatt contributed to conceptualise "the complexities of our relationship with history" (2).

conditioned the making of the war, many times concerning political lying, but also on certain domestic issues such as the reforms in health and education that reproduced the conservative ethos of privatisation.

On the other hand, another sector of the intellectual sphere that soon experienced disenchantment with the government was the group of theorists and critics that had previously contributed to the controversial debate of the revisionism of the left during the 1980s and early 1990s. These intellectuals—such as Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques, Eric Hobsbawm, David Marquand, and Will Hutton—had formerly approved the need of the Labour Party to adapt to the new emerging social and historical conditions. It was a new era in which the working class had evidently diminished its influence to win elections. In these intellectuals' view, the crisis of the left required a revision of the precepts of social democracy so as to adapt itself to the new times, and thus exert a functional role and realistic alternative to the conservative rule. In this context, Blair's modernising project seemed to fulfil many of these intellectuals' demands, this was the reason why, despite an early suspicion and mistrust that Blair was too conservative, they still supported a change of government in 1997. Scarcely one year after the election, these theorists joined in a collective publication of the already extinct magazine *Marxism Today*, an issue in which they expressed their disenchantment with the government and their opposition to Blair's reforms. They all agreed that Blair's approach to economy and public services was a mere continuation of Thatcherism, as Blair publicly announced that neoliberalism and globalisation were inevitable and that Britain needed to remain within the newly established global market. This recognised consumerist capitalist society turned into the *bête noire* against which left-wing intellectuals focused their reactions; these voices then exerted the role of the now extinct communism as the political resistance to global capitalism. Social democrats such as David Marquand, Tony Judt, Will Hutton, and Roy Hattersley denounced the growing inequalities under the dominant economic system, and accused the Blair government of damaging the long-established democratic system.

In sum, it has often been argued that British intellectuals at the turn of the twenty-first century have been too condescending and compassionate with power, and in those cases in which intellectuals have reacted against it, they have frequently been ignored and silenced. In the following chapters of this dissertation, I extensively argue that during the first half of the 1990s and coetaneous to the emergence of New Labour, some intellectuals relied on Blair's project and supported what they believed to be the

yearning left-wing alternative, whereas others were sceptical about Blair's modernising programme. However, despite a certain relaxation of their critical attitude during Blair's rise, intellectuals of all kinds—fiction writers, playwrights, theorists, critics, and figures from the art scene—quickly reacted against Blair's reforms. As will be analysed, shortly after Blair entered Number 10, these voices began to refute Blair's decisions, since they generally thought that, first of all, Blairism signified a continuation of Thatcherism and, secondly, that Blair's politics continued the special and controversial relationship with America. The following analysis of the British intellectuals under New Labour will show that, despite those pessimistic voices that claim that there is no such thing as a committed intellectual in twenty-first century Britain, there are many reasons to believe that British intellectuals have actively participated in the political life of their country.

3.4 THE DEATH OF THE INTELLECTUAL? THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY INTELLECTUAL

Jean-Paul Sartre's death in 1980 became a symbolic conclusion for the history of the twentieth-century intellectual in Europe. As has been frequently argued, the existence of the politically committed thinker, as Sartre himself defined the role of writers and their *littérature engagée*, has gradually decreased since the disappearance of "the great writer" in the last quarter of the past century. Although new intellectual voices have continued to emerge, they seem to be now focused on aspects of contemporary culture rather than being identified with the political ideologies that had formerly inspired passionate loyalties. Michel Winock claimed, in his study *Le Siècle des Intellectuels* (1997) that even though thinkers such as Claude Levi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser and Giles Deleuze continued the committed debate, there was a gradual depolitisation of intellectuals (Winock, 1997: 547). Winock referred to Sartre's statement that contemporary France had ceased to "need" intellectuals due to the improvement of the standards of living, the welfare state, and the enrichment of Western societies, all of which entailed a minor critical and surmounting exigency (550). In contemporary society, cultural analysts seem to warn against the risks and challenges of the new times, and provide an intellectual guide, and a moral referent to the dangers that our contemporary civilisation entails. For instance, as Winock pointed out, present-day intellectuals now warn against the dangers of the marginalisation of certain sectors

of society and the standardisation and massification of culture: "Cette révolte contre la massification, la standardisation, l'uniformisation croissante des sociétés, devient un nouvel enjeu des luttes politiques" (552).[50]

David Schalk contributed to the question supporting the view that since the 1980s, intellectuals have withdrawn themselves from public commitment and have retired to what Sartre called the "ivory tower" (Schalk, 1997: 272). In this respect, and as analysed in the methodological chapter of this dissertation, Michael Foucault, in conversation with Gilles Deleuze, affirmed that the traditional role of the intellectual was either to reproduce the bourgeois ideology of the capitalist society, or to react against it by speaking the truth "in the name of those who were forbidden to speak the truth" (Foucault, 1977: 207). In Foucault's view, the representative role of the intellectual was no longer valid, especially since the late 1960s coinciding with the student uprising in France in 1968, because "the intellectual discovered that the masses no longer need him to gain knowledge: they *know* perfectly well, without illusion; they know far better than he and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves" (207). Foucault continued to say that the representative position of the intellectual as a guiding light for the masses established a relation of power and a hierarchy between the thinker and the people. However, the author suggested that in contemporary culture we find that the intellectual has lost all kind of control, and their role is now to fight against those structures of power that turn the intellectual into an object and instrument to exert that power:

> Intellectuals are themselves agents of this system of power—the idea of their responsibility for "consciousness" and discourse forms part of the system. The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself "somewhat ahead and to the side" in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of "knowledge," "truth," "consciousness," and "discourse." (208)

Umberto Eco, in his study *Apocalittici e Integrati* (1965), pioneered the discourse of power relations between the cultural elites and the masses. The democratisation of the states after the Second World War made the masses participant of certain public questions that had previously been in the hands of the few and not the many. The

[50] "The battle against the growing massification and standardisation of societies became the new target of political causes" (my translation).

political and cultural hegemony has recently been extended to all spheres of society thanks to the development of the capitalist consumer society and the evolution of technology (mainly television and the Internet), which allows the citizen to reach information and consumer goods at an unprecedented speed. This sociological transformation endorsed the popular classes to have access to previously forbidden "bourgeois cultural models" and subsequently identify themselves with the high class (Eco, 1978: 19-20). In his study, Eco added that the masses' desire for embourgeoisement did not arise from the popular classes, but from the highbrows who, through media manipulation, instilled in them high class needs yielding a "civiltà di mutanti" or civilisation of mutants (21).

The fusion of different class layers (lower, middle and upper classes) formed a faded social structure that was orchestrated only for commercial purposes by making the masses aspire to exclusive artistic and cultural products, and making the high classes consume popular culture products. In this kind of society, the alienated relationship between high culture and mass culture deluded the role of intelligentsia, who seemed to be unnecessary for the now independent and autonomous masses. The common people began to disregard the highbrows' leadership in order to fight for their own political rights, and instead required a new type of intelligentsia that served as interpreter of contemporaneity. Accordingly, Zygmunt Bauman noticed two kinds of intellectuals, the modern and the postmodern intellectual:

> The typically modern strategy of intellectual work is one best characterized by the metaphor of the "legislator" role. It consists of making authoritative statements which arbitrate in controversies of opinions and which select those opinions which, having been selected, become correct and binding. The authority to arbitrate is in this case legitimized by superior (objective) knowledge to which intellectuals have a better access than the non-intellectual part of society. […]
>
> The typically post-modern strategy of intellectual work is one best characterized by the metaphor of the "interpreter" role. It consists of translating statements, made within one communally based tradition, so that they can be understood within the system of knowledge based on another tradition. […] This strategy is aimed at facilitating communication. (1987: 4-5)

Once the common people have emancipated their power of decision, the intellectual is no longer the leading voice. Instead, the intellectuals' knowledge and vision afford an explanatory role of the changes and challenges of our civilisation. The time of political identities when the intellectuals felt the need to take a stand and

vindicate their ideals has passed: "The age of ideology is over. And as a result, politics has lost its moral dignity; it is mere management now" said Andrew Marr in a column for *The Independent* (1996c: 17). For contemporary theorists, the present-day intellectual has less to do with ideologies and more to do with the masses. It seems now essential to deconstruct the anachronistic concept of the bourgeois intellectual and artist as sitting at Parisian cafes where debates on "the universals," such as culture, art, politics, philosophy and literature appeared more important than superfluous ordinary issues of popular culture. In this sense, Marr warned, "for those with a strongly romantic view of the role of intellectuals—the pebble glasses, the cigar smoke and the grave acts of immorality—it is all rather depressing. No wild calls to arms, no denunciatory rage" (17). In the new society of the 1990s, the intellectual rebel passed away to give room to a newborn complex thinker; it was the time of pop civilisation in which the image ended up being more real than the substance, and presentation acquired all value. In the society of television, the Internet and technology, political and ideological representation has been substituted by media symbols, thus establishing an intimate dependency between public political commitment and the media channels. Intellectuals seemed to be now obliged either to participate or avoid what has been called the *celebrity culture*, in which public figures need media to address mass population and express their statements. This is the analysis offered by Stefan Collini when he explains the death of the intellectual: for the author, there is a need to accept that twenty-first century thinkers have reshaped their identity as a consequence of the transformation of diffusion and redistribution of knowledge. On the one hand, academic research has limited the intellectual's knowledge to very specific and concrete fields of study; and on the other, television, culture and media structures have dominated and eclipsed the public sphere, leaving therefore no room for intellectuals to express themselves, and obliging them to partake in these discourses by appearing on TV and writing for popular publications:

> By the end of the twentieth century, it became common to single out two forces in particular as largely responsible between them for the "death" or "decline" of the intellectual. […] The two forces were, first, the process of intellectual specialization, especially its subdivision of knowledge into an ever-multiplying profusion of mutually incomprehensible and inward-looking academic disciplines; and second, the rise of celebrity culture, with the dynamics of the popular media increasingly governing the public sphere of modern societies, leading to the displacement of the intellectual by the media personality. (Collini, 2009: 451)

In other words, for many, the intellectual is an extinct species whose original and traditional role has been usurped by the celebrity. However, and contrarily to a generalised current opinion, there is some sense in the idea that contemporary intellectuals, in order to perform their dissident and oppositional function, need to trivialise and popularise their discourse, and integrate themselves in a media world marked by technologies. As Sonia Baelo-Allué states in her work *Bret Easton Ellis's Controversial Fiction* (2011), "celebrity authors can not be judged by past standards" (21); contemporary thinkers need to approach the masses' interests and need to assimilate themselves in the consumerist industrial culture in order to legitimise their discourses. The intellectuals' right to belong to and understand their audiences' reality enables them to become more approachable and connect with the authenticity of the common man, as well as with his/her reality and historical circumstance. It is precisely this historical awareness what strengthens the position of the intellectual in his/her society. If the banner of the old engaged writer meant to be participant of the revolutions and evolutions of his/her time, the new intellectual, with multifaceted shapes, is responsible for seeing "events in their historical perspective" (Chomsky, 1967). For Noam Chomsky, the current responsibility of the intellectual is also performed in relation to history: the intellectual has got a mission to warn mankind of their previous, past mistakes. Author Blake Morrison, in a personal conversation, analogously emphasised this same idea of the intellectual enclosed in his historical reality: "The writer, the intellectual, has a sense of history, because so often it's the lack of the sense of history that makes people, you know, repeat mistakes, and that's why the role of the writer is important, in that way" (Morrison, 2011).

Many analysts have criticised that the comfort and welfare of the 1990s bought the silence and submissiveness of a social class who had previously opposed authoritarian governments, and who now seemed installed in the new mainstream popular culture. However, it is necessary to understand the contemporary intellectual in his/her cultural and historical multiplicity, as it seems quite demanding to formulate a stable and unyielding description for the twenty-first century intellectual. Contemporary Western societies have evolved towards a sociological complexity that make definite and exclusive descriptions unfeasible, and there exists the need to support some authoritative voices who claim that in our contemporary societies we need to be flexible and open-minded when depicting and portraying reality. Therefore, the postmodern intellectual distances himself/herself from that "romantic" figure of the late nineteenth

century, a figure that was cloaked in a cultural and intellectual elitism, and who was simultaneously passionate about vindicating the universal values of truth and justice. The complexity surrounding contemporary intellectuals is characterised by a historical and sociological revolution that started in the aftermath of the Second World War: new societies have achieved very high standards of living, and humanitarian challenges have accordingly been abated.

In this context of prosperity, New Labour arrived to inaugurate the society of the new millennium, meaning that within this global comfort the challenge of reacting against power receded. We will rarely find a traditional and full-time committed political figure whose main priority focuses exclusively on the discourse of political ideology in general, and Blair's politics in particular, as there is no single "enemy" to fight against in order to change reality. This absolute systematic opposition is not valid in contemporary reality, as intellectuals face complex societies that make their opposition and protests equally diverse. The complexity of modern life and the fragmentation of contemporary culture make increasingly difficult to find the perfect full-time and systematically dissident intellectual. Intellectuals in the beginning of the twenty-first century are consequently unsystematic and contradictory, and they seldom fulfil the expectations of those who demand a perfect political and counter-hegemonic resistance. The ideal of the twentieth-century thinker, understood as the unspoiled *enfant terrible*, overshadows the prejudiced conception of the current intellectual, identified as middle class and devotee of media appearances, corrupted by capitalist comfort and politically indifferent. However, present-day historical and cultural conditions have only changed the prestige and position of contemporary writers and thinkers who still develop their function as public nonconformist figures and who react against the abuses of political authorities. These intellectuals' contradictions and incongruences do not differ from the criticism attached to canonical intellectuals of the twentieth century, namely Sartre in France or Orwell in Britain. Those idealised writers of the era of ideologies were often attacked by other contemporaries for not being completely committed to the ideals of equality, truth and justice that they defended, and for being, on some occasions, too enclosed in the ivory tower or too close to a particular ideological hegemony. The contradiction of "the great writer" remains latent in the contemporary intellectual, which ultimately deconstructs those arguments used to idealise the nostalgia for the old thinker, thus underestimating the quality and value of the present-day writer. From this point of view, there are voices that claim that the

political role of the intellectual is still necessary to warn against the risks and challenges of our evolving cultures, as they provide light upon darkness and confusion, and inspire their audiences to act accordingly. Perhaps it is the *status* of the intellectual that might have changed in all these years of dialectic conversations. In the past, the ownership of knowledge belonged to the few ones who opposed the establishment from the margins, they were revolutionary activists that rejected the masses but defended their rights. Today, the spread of education has conformed an allegedly more powerful mass culture that has consequently modified the nature of the intellectual: the privilege of culture and knowledge no longer belongs to writers, thinkers and philosophers; on the contrary, contemporary intellectuals are typified by the diversity and complexity that characterise their era. This shows that the oppositional role of the classic intellectual is now performed by a diverse and overlapped nature of hybrid professionals, representatives of this cultural "pastiche," whose dissident political action is as valid as that of the highbrows of yesteryear. Postmodern public voices are gradually detached from high intellectual spheres and are closely related to the masses. The intellectual now needs to merge into the popular culture in order to acquire its real significance; intellectuals need to accept that they depend on the common ordinary culture to exert their role, not their power.

To conclude, who are the British intellectuals? Do they exist? Have they traditionally been too close to power or not revolutionary enough? The historical evolution of the twentieth-century British intellectual introduced in the present chapter aimed to provide an answer to those voices that claim that there is no such thing as a British intellectual. As many public figures have regularly argued, British intellectuals have historically been considered an elitist class of highbrows not truly committed to the principles of radicalism and social justice, and contrarily, too supportive of political power. As has been shown in this historical outline of British intellectuals, there have been dissident thinkers and writers who have constantly opposed the different challenges of every historical juncture. Even despite contradictions and ambiguities that have been attached to many of these figures, it is necessary to acknowledge their overall nonconformist function in a broader perspective. Although the French prototype has often been identified in its exemplariness regarding political radicalism, it has been shown that the French model cannot boast of a systematic commitment against power abuse, neither the older generations of idealised British intellectuals are prevented from criticism. Accepting that the romanticised vision of past or foreign intellectuals

overshadows the reputation and functionality of present intellectuals is necessary to observe that British intellectuals do exist and have been engaged with history and contemporary reality.

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4. FICTION WRITERS AND BLAIRISM: CRITICAL WRITINGS AND OTHER OPPOSITIONAL RESPONSES TO BLAIR'S PREMIERSHIP

The classification of the British intellectuals during Tony Blair's premiership has been carried out in three distinct groups of dissident voices. This chapter focuses specifically on the analysis of the fiction writers who publicly criticised and denounced Tony Blair's reforms throughout a selection of their most significant critical texts, namely novels, public statements, interviews and opinion essays. Through this all-inclusive collection of writers and their diverse critical texts, I will identify the contemporary oppositional intellectuals that reacted against the government of Tony Blair according to the theoretical approaches produced by Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault and Edward Said. I also aim to contribute to a wide contemporary debate that revolves around the nature and style of the contemporary critical writer, a type of writer who, at the turn of the twenty-first century, seemed to reproduce the nonconformist and insurgent function of the twentieth-century counter-hegemonic intellectual, but with new attitudes and new sociological profiles. That is, the present study reflects on the oppositional writers that publicly criticised the government of Tony Blair and thus contributes to discourses on the sociology of the intellectual at the turn of twenty-first century Britain.

First of all, this chapter provides a chronological-historical overview of the critical British intellectuals who represented and criticised—sometimes very subtly—

the political reality of their time, and more concretely, the decisions and reforms implemented by Tony Blair. As previously explained, the political resistance of British writers had its most immediate antecedents in the intellectual dissidence under the rule of Margaret Thatcher, a turbulent era that evolved into a seemingly passive exhaustion of these critical voices during the governments of John Major and Tony Blair. In tune with this appreciation, writer and critic Stuart Kelly pointed out that while the restless years of the 1980s provoked an unquestionable confrontation of British writers against the government, the late 1990s seemed to be symbolised by a complacent popular support for the newly elected Labour Prime Minister (Kelly, Stuart 2008). On this point, author Blake Morrison, writing for *The Guardian*, questioned the political disaffection that British novelists had with the Blair government, especially when compared with the outburst of intellectuals' hostility under Thatcherism. Were there reasons for a massive and passionate opposition to the government after 1997? Did Blairism inspire satirical authors to denounce the inconsistencies and injustices of the decade as they had done with Thatcher? Morrison argued that intellectuals were not as radically committed as their predecessors, thus rendering subversive intellectuals superfluous or hardly inexistent:

> But as to novels about Blair or Blairism, relatively few spring to mind. Why? Because so much has been written in the media that there's nothing left to say? […] Or is it that something about Blair defeats the imagination? […] Blair has been more bellicose than Margaret Thatcher. But Thatcher made better copy for novelists. (Morrison, 2007: 4)

However, Morrison emphasised that there was indeed significant literature about the reactions to the Blair government, namely satirical depictions of the Prime Minister and his "flaws" (4). The Blair project embodied a friendly alternative to the conservative rule of past governments that inspired political calm and appeased revolutionary instincts, this being the reason why, in the beginning, some intellectual voices supported New Labour's programme—such was the case of Alistair Beaton, Peter Akinti, Jonathan Coe, Andrew O'Hagan and Hari Kunzru—whereas others showed evident signs of scepticism—such as Martin Amis, Will Self, Julian Barnes and Fay Weldon. Nevertheless, these writers gradually opposed and criticised what it seemed to be a drastic transformation of the Labour Party into a calculated acceptance of capitalism and neoliberalism by a Labour Prime Minister. This early disenchantment

was manifest through the many different texts and public statements that these writers produced in order to complain and oppose the Blairite discourse, more concretely, the growing conservatism of Blair's Third Way, the apparent degeneration of the welfare state, the controversial relationship media-government, and last but not least, the Iraq war and the apparently edited dossier published to raise support for the invasion. By the end of the Blair era, the broad popular clamour for the Labour government had vanished, and writers served as witnesses and illustrators of the general atmosphere of popular and intellectual antagonism. Broadly speaking and keeping in mind their diversity, British writers proceeded to represent the perceived disenchantment with the New Labour government:

> The central dilemma of these novels was not so much a prognosis of the contemporary, but a diagnosis of how the enthusiasm of 1997 became the jaded disaffection of 2007. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how the nebulous rhetoric of Blair policy (communitarianism, the third way, the stakeholder society) could have been used to animate a novelistic structure. Blair's legacy was not one of artistic inspiration ("Cool Britannia" being a thankfully passing tawdry phase), but artistic introspection. (Kelly, Stuart 2008: 54)

This chapter thus focuses on the performance of fiction writers, who will be analysed in the present framework in chronological order according to the publications of their writings and other public actions. "Early Criticism 1995—2001" deals with those texts—fiction, essayistic prose, and interviews—which were published in the early years of Blair's rise to power and his first term in office up to 2001. These samples of political opposition mostly refer to the modernisation process that Blair implemented in the Labour Party, leading many intellectuals of the time to foretell a prospective turn to the right by the new Labour leader. In this way, this section includes declarations of some writers who admitted having supported Labour during those years of the late 1990s, as well as an analysis of the oppositional action of the writers that first criticised Blair's project either in their literature or in different public statements. The order of appearance of these writers corresponds to a chronological criterion, meaning that it is Martin Amis the first writer here analysed for he was the first writer that included a reference to New Labour in his novel *The Information* published in 1995, him being followed by Julian Barnes and his *Letters from London* also published in 1995, by Margaret Drabble and her novel *The Witch of Exmoor* published in 1996, Harold Pinter and his public statements during the years 1998 and 1999, and Fay

Weldon and her collection of essays *Godless in Eden* published in 1999. This chronological organisation will help the reader observe the evolving perceptions of British intellectuals towards Blair's project. "Mid-term Criticism 2001—2005" reflects upon the most controversial issues of Blair's second term against which writers and intellectuals reacted, namely Blair's domestic affairs—such as reductions in public spending—and most significantly the Iraq war. The order of appearance of these writers similarly responds to a chronological criterion. Regarding the intellectual criticism of Blair's domestic agenda, writer Sue Townsend and her novel *Number Ten* published in 2002 are analysed in the first place, being followed by Jonathan Coe's *The Closed Circle*, published in 2004. In relation to the Iraq war, the intellectuals' diverse reactions are also organised in chronological order: the *openDemocracy* debates (2003), Harold Pinter's Nobel Prize Lecture (2005), Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday* (2005) and Robert Harris *The Ghost* (2007) are analysed in this sequential order. Finally, "Disenchantment 2005—2010" identifies and analyses the publications and other public statements of those writers who looked at Blair's last reforms and his forthcoming legacy with disillusion and disappointment. These writers' declarations were published either during Blair's last years of his premiership (2005—2007), or during a post-Blairite era in which different writers and thinkers reflected upon the Prime Minister's legacy (until 2010). The order of appearance of these writers is again determined by the chronological paradigm that structures this dissertation: Hanif Kureishi and his collection of essays *The Word and the Bomb* published in 2005 are analysed first—a significant text during Blair's third term for it deals with Blair's approach to multiculturalism and other racial issues that were especially controversial after the 7/7 London bombings—this being followed by three consecutive novels that attend to the general disenchantment of British society with New Labour, such as Blake Morrison's *South of the River* (2007), Richard T. Kelly's *Crusaders* (2008), and Sue Townsend's *Adrian Mole: The Prostrate Years* (2009). Only one exception, that of Martin Amis and his article "The Long Kiss Goodbye" (2007), is located in the last place and out of the chronological organisation. The reason for this being so is due to the nature of such piece of journalism: whereas most writers evolved towards a gradual opposition to Blair during his mandate, Amis's article serves as an illustration of a reverted tendency, thus implying a subtle defence and admiration for the Prime Minister at the end of his premiership. This will allow the reader to contrast Amis's perceptions in the beginning

of the New Labour years, when his novel *The Information* (1995) was published, with his views on the politician by the end of the Blair era.

In tune with this structure, and with the aim of exposing the historical evolution and curve of disenchantment that many oppositional writers experienced with Blairism, it is necessary to see how and why these writers have been considered subversive intellectual voices, and why they have been included in the present study. As stated in the methodological chapter of this dissertation, I will ground my research on the theories of Gramsci, Foucault and Said in order to identify the counter-power and counter-hegemonic voices that subversively reacted against the politics of Blair's government. It will be the political resistance of these figures, through their committed writing and other public statements, what will determine their position and function as subversive intellectuals. Firstly, Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual" as politically engaged with the reality of the time, actively oppositional in his or her function as a public voice, and faithfully committed to the principles of the class he or she claims to represent will be used to analyse the action of the following oppositional writers. These organic intellectuals were guiding leaders that inspired the masses to "escape from or improve their condition" (Gramsci, 1971: 14). These intellectuals were part of the counter-hegemonic forces that fought to challenge the established hegemony and change the status quo. However, it is necessary to mention that the writers here included exerted their oppositional function as rebellious leading voices mostly individually, and not as a collective revolutionary force as Gramsci stated. This means that their opposition and style as nonconformist intellectuals will not function in collective terms, but mostly in their individuality, diversity and heterogeneity.[51] In this sense, the writers here concerned need to be understood in a new historical context different from the orthodox Marxist conjuncture that gave birth to Gramsci's theory; and yet, many of these writers will be classified and identified as "intellectuals" for they do perform their role as oppositional and politically committed figures that represent and defend, individually and in diverse forms, the rights of subaltern groups. Moreover, even though some of these writers have certain ideological affinities, they will be, in the majority of the cases, detached from party loyalties and from the organic class they claim to represent.

[51] Only on a rare exception, as happened with the Iraq war, writers will organise collective responses to oppose the government.

Secondly, Foucault's interpretation of the intellectual as an oppositional figure is similarly used to determine the functionality of the following writers as counter-power intellectuals. For Foucault, as for Gramsci, it is the subversive *function* that makes a person—or a "professional" using the Foucauldian terminology—an intellectual. In the author's view, the contemporary intellectual, understood as the great writer, had started to abandon erudite literary circles in order to approach other spheres of knowledge—the subjugated and the unrecognised knowledges—through which these specific professionals, who were concerned with a concrete injustice, could speak for themselves. It is thus necessary to clarify that the writers included in this chapter all belong to literary circles, that is, the tradition of the "great writer" that, according to Foucault, was disappearing (Foucault, 1980: 129). Nevertheless, as will be subsequently discussed, some of these writers are precisely more associated with mainstream culture and commercial literature (i.e. Robert Harris, Sue Townsend, Jonathan Coe and Blake Morrison) than with canonical and elitist literary spheres. From this perspective, I here defend the need to consider these writers as valid intellectual figures that are sometimes "located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (82), and are therefore legitimate sources to analyse the political opposition to the Blair government. Other writers, however, still remain within erudite considerations of canonical literature (Margaret Drabble, Julian Barnes, Martin Amis, Harold Pinter, Fay Weldon and Ian McEwan), and yet, some of them have been often accused of becoming mainstream writers and celebrity characters. In any case, they have all been analysed in terms of their political commitment and their oppositional *function* when using their writings to debilitate and diminish Blair's power.

Thirdly, Said and his most recent interpretation of the intellectual have been used to select and analyse the following writers. For Said, the intellectual was truly understood as the writer or academic politically engaged with the injustices of his or her time, thus consistently opposing power from the margins as an outsider. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters of this dissertation, the concept of the intellectual as used in this study is not exclusive to the figure of the writer or the academic as Said proffered, and as will be shown, other subversive popular figures will be considered equally valid for the analysis of intellectuals and Blairism. Yet, it is necessary to emphasise Said's defence of the political commitment of the intellectual who challenges power and who is publicly willing "to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma" (Said, 1996: 11). For Said, the true intellectual is the

one who challenges the status quo and who aspires "to induce a change in the moral climate whereby aggression is seen as such" (100), whether that means taking a stand against a government or against any instance of oppression. Hence, the writers here included fulfilled this oppositional function when they criticised the Blair government and when, through their writings and other public statements, denounced the injustices that took place as a result of Blair's political reforms. This was the writers' intention of making embarrassing questions, confronting orthodoxy and dogma, and challenging the status quo. Furthermore, Said particularly focused on the importance of marginality and what he called the "relative independence" of the intellectual. For Said, the true intellectual was the outsider who exerted a counter-power function with independence and resisted political or economic pressures in particular contexts. As will be shown, the marginality of the writer, at least of the writers here included, will be sometimes put into question, and many of the following figures will be often criticised either for being too middle-class and bourgeois, or for becoming too commercial and mainstream. The marginality that is, for Said, a precondition to define the intellectual will be frequently questioned, and still, that will not challenge, in many of the cases, the oppositional and subversive actions of these figures. Despite the fact that intellectuals should be systematically oppositional to any regime of thought, any ideology and form of power, many of the leading intellectual voices here analysed, although subversive against Blair's rule, revolve around circles of mainstream culture and bourgeois comfort.

Consequently, I consider relevant to mention Lawrence Driscoll's *Evading Class in Contemporary British Literature* (2009), an in-depth analysis of class attachments in contemporary writers, whose main argument states that many present-day fiction writers, because of their middle-class backgrounds, unconsciously reproduce and reinforce bourgeois worldviews despite their attempts to render themselves liberal and left-wing. According to Driscoll, many of the writers analysed in his research are "too" middle-class and maintain their social comfort while pretending to hypocritically defend the working class. For this scholar, the British intelligentsia is largely dependent on a very elitist educational class completely detached from the common citizen: **"**When we read the canonized contemporary British novel we are dealing with a literary form produced not by 'Britain' but by a small middle-class section of society and one which is encouraged by various media to see itself as the spokesperson for all classes" (2009: 4). Driscoll continued to say: "The purpose of Literature is to secure and maintain a hegemonic position for the middle class" (14). For the critic, contemporary British

fiction is not a radical example of the counter-hegemonic discourse, as "the 'important' contemporary British novelists do not really represent a 'range' or even a 'cross section' of British contemporary experience by any means, but constitutes a group of novelists who emerge from a rather narrow middle class/university experience" (17). British writers consequently reproduce and reinforce a middle-class, bourgeois lifestyle that ultimately aims to espouse the dominant hegemony. However, my position in this chapter is that while it is true that some of the writers Driscoll mentions do reproduce this conservative middle-class, elitist and dominant worldview, it would be inappropriate to conclude that because of their middle-class backgrounds, contemporary British writers are incapable of subversive writing. What I try to defend in this chapter is that, although some of these writers unconsciously reproduce, rather than deconstruct hegemonic discourses, many others—the majority here included—effectively exert their function as counter-power voices by attempting to debilitate and dismantle the Blairite discourse. It is in this sense that I use the term "subversive," for this is a claim to value the effective function of many counter-hegemonic voices that exert a valid form of oppositional and critical action to Blair's politics.

After having established the criteria used to identify the oppositional writers—as critics—it is necessary to clarify the criteria used for the selection of the texts. With the aim of illustrating the writers' opposition to the Blair government, I will make use of their most relevant dissident productions—both engaged writings and other public statements—in order to show how they criticised the government and what kind of critical forms they deployed for that purpose. That is, the following writers expressed their disaffection and disenchantment with the government through novels, interviews, public statements, lectures, opinion essays, and journalism, all of them valid forms of political resistance that were used to destabilise and debilitate Blair's established discourse. The present analysis is consequently an eclectic study and a heterogeneous collection of texts that responds to the cultural diversity of the present times (Waugh, 1995: 212). This rationale acts as the *raison d'être* of Cultural Studies, which defend the need to make transdisciplinary analyses of culture. In that sense, the holistic and comprehensive study here given has made very difficult to analyse all writers and texts in detail, which means that the reader needs to consider two aspects: first of all, that because of the large number of writers and texts here included, it is not possible to provide a full analysis of every individual writer/text, this being the reason why some of them will be analysed in depth and others will be briefly mentioned. Secondly, although

essential to examine the writers' counter-hegemonic resistance, the texts are exclusively interpreted as political instruments utilised to criticise the government, which means that the reader should not expect a canonical and traditional literary analysis of these texts: this is not a literary study, but an analysis of the political commitment of a number of writers as is demonstrated through their critical texts and statements.

Furthermore, the following samples of political resistance—novels, interviews, and opinion essays—will be all considered political products through which the writers expressed their disaffection and disappointment with the Blair government. In the case of the non-fiction texts (interviews, opinion essays, journalism), the purpose of making a public critique will be explicit. However, regarding fiction—mainly novels—it is necessary to clarify that although they will evidently contain multiple significations and other possible interpretations, I will here focus on the critical (political) meanings included in these texts. In this sense, these novels and fiction writings articulate a position of criticism and resistance to the social and political conflicts of the Blair era. As Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield defended, there exists a need to interpret literary texts as conveying political meanings, that is, as a conscious or unconscious reflection of social conflicts and tensions. In their view, "Cultural materialism does not pretend to political neutrality. It knows that no cultural practice is ever without political significance" (Dollimore and Sinfield, 1985: viii). In the context of this study, the texts here included will not be presented or analysed in their literary forms, but instead, they will be treated as political constructs through which certain social and political conflicts are reflected. Stuart Kelly, in his article "Novelising New Labour" (2008), also stressed that there exists an intrinsic bound between literature and politics, an intimate relationship that makes literature mirror and represent particular socio-historical conditions, and most importantly, the "counter-histories" and the "public pronouncements" (Kelly, Stuart 2008: 52). That is, fictionalising history does not always entail an attempt to represent the official reality, but it also endeavours to illustrate unacknowledged stories and silenced discourses. In their portrayal of the tensions operating in a particular society, novelists indirectly address non-official versions of reality. As will be seen in the following account of writers and Blairism, many of the novels under examination entail an opposition to Blair's official discourse, exposing therefore the injustices, contradictions and flaws of the Labour Prime Minister.

4.1 EARLY CRITICISM (1995—2001)

The modernisation that Blair implemented within the Labour Party elicited both enthusiasm and early suspicion among different sectors of British society. On the one hand, the new emerging leader incited popular clamour and a generalised environment of hope and optimistic expectations. The exhaustion of British intellectuals and British society as a whole with Tory governments led British citizens and many liberal writers to support a change of government focused on the victory of New Labour. In this context, many writers admitted voting for Labour in 1997, such as novelist Fay Weldon, who had supported Blair despite certain reservations for "a change of government is necessary, and Blair is the one to bring about the change" (Weldon, 2000: 164). Playwright Alistair Beaton declared to have received New Labour with enthusiasm: "I voted Labour in May 1997, and felt an overwhelming sense of relief to see Britain liberated from the bunch of second-raters who had been running it for so long" (Beaton, 2001: 14). Also, Nigerian British author Peter Akinti openly expressed his enthusiasm, for he thought that Labour was going to fight racism in Britain: "I gazed around before I marked my X. I had a good feeling in my belly, a really good feeling. On the way home I called my old man and told him I had voted Labour. 'That's my boy,' he said. History was made and I thought I was part of it. It felt like a breath of clean air" (Akinti, 2010). Editor and writer Andrew O'Hagan also admitted voting for Labour thinking that the party defended political decency and public services (O'Hagan, 2010);[52] writer Hari Kunzru also voted Labour believing that it embodied the ideals of social equality and "ethical foreign policy" (Kunzru, 2010), the same reason why novelist Jonathan Coe equally voted Labour that year (Coe, 2010a).

In an atmosphere that signalled hope and widespread support for Labour among British writers, **Martin Amis** was one of the novelists that first fictionalised the ideological climate of the pre-Labour years. Having been *enfant terrible* par excellence under Thatcherism, Amis was a writer politically committed to the human condition in its historical context and was well known for his controversial statements about contemporary political and cultural issues, namely capitalism, terrorism, nuclear

[52] Andrew O'Hagan's novels *Our Fathers* (1999) and *Be Near Me* (2006), although not explicitly a depiction of the Blair years, deal with the historical, political, and personal hopes of a generation. *Our Fathers* portrays the disappointments of socialism through a sense of loss and frustration in the face of personal and historical changes. *Be Near Me* also attempts to depict the feeling of frustration, disappointment and hopelessness in contemporary Britain (O'Hagan, 2010; O'Brien, 2006: 22).

weapons and the Muslim world. In the 1990s, Amis contributed to the satirical depictions of the time with a brief reference to New Labour in his novel *The Information* (1995), in which the author examined the pro-Labour atmosphere and the enthusiasm of British society and many writers and intellectuals who publicly claimed to support Labour. Everybody seemed to be Labour, everybody except for Labour itself that was now changing into something else. This is Amis's subtle critique of the atmosphere of political liberalism and left-wing enthusiasm that invaded the intellectual spheres of those years. In the novel, Amis's characters, the writers Richard Tull and Gwyn Barry, function as a metanarratological portrait of the political atmosphere in the Britain of 1995 when many intellectuals supported Labour because it seemed naturally conceived that a writer or an intellectual had to be pro-Labour:

> Of course, thought Richard. Yeah: of course Gwyn was Labour. It was obvious. Obvious not from the ripply cornices 20 feet above their heads, not from the brass lamps or the military plumpness of the leather-topped desk. Obvious because Gwyn was what he was, a writer, in England, at the end of the twentieth century. There was nothing else for such a person to be. Richard was Labour, equally obviously. It often seemed to him, moving in the circles he moved in and reading what he read, that everyone in England was Labour, except the Government [...] All writers, all book people, were Labour, which was one of the reasons why they got on so well, why they didn't keep suing each other and beating each other up. (Amis, 1996: 21-22)

Amis satirically dramatises the rising enthusiasm for the Blair project among writers and intellectuals: "All writers, all book people, were Labour" (22). All intellectuals seemed to be, in Amis's view, now supportive and welcoming with the government-to-be instead of being oppositional and subversive against it, "which was one of the reasons why they got on so well, why they didn't keep suing each other and beating each other up" (22). This was Amis's particular criticism of intellectuals themselves who were suddenly associated with power instead of confronting it, a criticism that depicted the new contemporary writer as always pro-Labour, popular and mainstream instead of oppositional and marginal. In this sense, Amis "captures the conformism of middle-class liberal opinion" in those years, that is, the conformism of the intellectual liberal class (Cohen, 2009). Amis's novel therefore contributes to debates on the writer in his/her contemporaneity, and how contemporary writers interact with their political and historical context. According to Nicole Larose, Amis endeavours

to portray how a number of writers had become conformist celebrities, and how the anti-intellectualism of commodified literature and popular writing became more successful than serious writing (2005: 161-162). In this sense, Amis's depiction of those writers who were now supportive of Labour and who succumbed to popular waves of enthusiasm and spread admiration for the new Labour leader was in tune with a new profile of the contemporary writer that was being instituted as mainstream and populist, and was now involved in contemporary politics by supporting the rising party instead of being critical and oppositional to it.

However, Amis's burlesque description of the seemingly liberal intellectual scene shows that although he has often been defined as a man of the left—his father was particularly critical of Martin's left-wing views (Moseley, 2005: 303)—he has been different to other contemporaries on the left, and on many occasions, he has tried to stand on the margins of the leftist crowd. His image of *enfant terrible* apparently located on the margins of mainstream culture seemed to guarantee Amis a reputation of outsider; yet, many critics have underlined that Amis's eventual turn to the right, his growing conservatism and his inner contradictions have made him closer to his father, which has eventually turned him into one of the British literary neo-conservatives, a "Blitcon" such as Salman Rushdie or Ian McEwan (Sardar, 2006: 52; also see Anthony, 2010; Cohen, 2009). In this sense, his "bad boy" appearance contradicts the evidence that Amis is a popular and wealthy celebrity writer, a writer who accuses the very capitalist system that has made him rich, and a wealthy writer who has simultaneously been a life-long Labour supporter (Buckley, 1995: 71; Stadlen, 2013: 17). Is Amis an anti-capitalist capitalist who votes Labour? Is he an anti-mainstream but popular and telegenic writer? This is Daniel Johnson's criticism of Amis when reviewing *The Information*. Johnson argues that Amis's position in his novel is that all mainstream and popular authors support Labour, "[it] was, I thought, implicitly a criticism of one aspect of the literary freemasonry" (Johnson, 1995: 16). Amis's attempt to expose that all writers have to be left-wing as a precondition to gain credibility, visibility and success, masks the fact that Amis is perhaps more conservative than what he claims, and still uses the Labour banner to appear liberal and progressive. For Johnson, Amis himself and other well-known liberal writers are the kind of fake socialists that gain status and prestige by just being on the left: "Mr Amis may be right about the politics of his friends (and former friends) such as Ian McEwan, Julian Barnes and Salman Rushdie, but their socialism is often an aesthetic rather than an ethical imperative" (16). Johnson

contends that contemporary left-wing writers, such as Will Self or Esther Freud, are no longer inspired by the active political commitment that characterised the previous generation of the 1980s when writers such as the Pinters used to hold political discussions with the aim to broaden perspectives and orchestrate oppositional actions: "Just now, most of them may indeed intend to vote Labour at the next general election (so do the rest of the public), but that does not mean that they define themselves as habitual Labour voters" (16). This is the political apathy that according to other analysts dominated the decade of the 1990s (i.e. Luckhurst, 2005; Bracewell, 2002): whereas writers and intellectuals were particularly committed during previous decades, political lethargy and pessimism seemed to govern Britain at the turn of the twenty-first century. For these critics, the left-wing writers and artists of the 1990s were no longer committed figures, yet they used the Labour aesthetic to become popular and successful.

In this respect, I join Johnson's view that Amis was particularly inconsistent and contradictory in his political views, and whereas the novelist traditionally claimed to be on the left, many of his latest statements have gradually located him more on the right. As will be alleged, Amis's political evolution during the Blair years will confirm this pattern of gradual conservatism: whilst many writers were initially supportive of Labour and became gradually disenchanted with Blair's performance in Number 10 throughout his ten years in office, Amis, who was an early unenthusiastic Labour voter, would eventually feel certain sympathy and admiration for a very unpopular Labour leader. Contrastingly, I partially disagree with Johnson and all those who state that left-wing writers in the 1990s were characterised by political apathy and pessimism. At first, and during the years of gestation of New Labour, it seemed true that writers and intellectuals did flow against the revolutionary tide—even to the extent of enthusiasm or passive support for Labour—but very soon some writers began to satirically represent what would become the established caricature of the Prime Minister in order to release livid reactions against Tony Blair by the end of his premiership. This dissertation is precisely an attempt to show that although times had changed and could not be compared with the turbulent Thatcher years, Blair's politics progressively inspired committed and passionate counter-power retorts in many left-wing writers and intellectuals.

4.1.1 Initial Scepticism among British Writers (1995—1997)

In the beginning, Blair's modernisation was what initially triggered political satire against his project. Blair's ideological reform and the party's rebranded image—that sought to win the 1997 election—irreversibly dissociated the new Labour from the considered Old Labour, thus upsetting the leftist sectors of the party and other supporters. Blair's "New Labour, New Britain" caused hostility among many political analysts and British writers who criticised and opposed Blair's early rebranding of the Labour Party. His political hybrid of left-wing and right-wing policies that pleased both private enterprise and public services, the removal of Clause IV of the party constitution that detached New Labour from its traditional loyalty to public ownership, the rupture with the trade unions and Blair's new-formed affair with the business and the middle classes were reforms that did not leave many public voices indifferent: they satirised, denounced and caricatured Blair and his new programme. Still and all, the writers that began representing and satirically portraying the new emerging Labour leader were in many cases approving and supportive of his electoral victory. Despite the fact that many of these writers acknowledged having voted for Blair in 1997, they were simultaneously sceptical and cautious about the programme that Blair had begun to release since 1994 when he was elected leader of the party. Other radical voices, however, distrusted him from the start and admitted being able to predict the disenchantment that Blairism eventually caused on the left. Sue Townsend, a declared socialist, realised that Blair's modernisation during the pre-1997 election years was taking the party further to the right, which meant that, in her view, there was no alternative left for the working class as there was no party that guaranteed representation and protection of the poor. According to Townsend, during the early 1990s common people felt broadly disenchanted with, and apathetic towards British politics, they could trust neither party nor politician for "they [were] all liars," and they were all the same (Townsend, 1997). New Labour seemed to no longer be a socialist party:

> I don't believe in the underclass, but I do believe in the existence of class, and I think that any political party worth having should be class-based. A party needs to guard and protect its people's interests as fiercely as a lioness protecting its young. The vermin, as Aneurin Bevan described the Tory party, will shortly be crawling back behind the skirting-board and New Labour will be dancing a victory jig on the floor. And I hope that over the coming years a socialist Labour Party will gather strength. Somebody has to care for the poor. (1997)

Similarly, remembering those excited years of the mid 1990s when Blair's project begun to take shape, Will Self declared that he had been particularly mistrustful of the new Labour leader:

> I'd had a bad feeling about Blair since he'd begun sopping up the limelight as shadow home secretary; his posturing on law and order was reminiscent of Bill Clinton's policy triangulation—an effective tactic, but utterly unprincipled. This was Blair's underlying gittishness—but as for the sanctimony, it came off him in waves and I couldn't understand why others on the left didn't sense it. But people mostly believe what suits them, and when Blair told them they could have it all—unlimited economic growth spearheaded by unbridled capitalism and enormously improved social provision—they developed a faith strong enough to sustain them through the next 13 years of disillusionment. (Self, 2010)

Despite the fact that many writers and intellectuals were supportive of Tony Blair in his progress to Number 10 during the mid 1990s, many others were sceptical and suspicious of his modernising project even to the point of suggesting quite early that the new Labour leader seemed to be the ideological heir of Margaret Thatcher. **Julian Barnes** was among those who satirised the progress of Tony Blair. Like other contemporary writers, Barnes had been a committed writer and key figure in the literature of the 1980s, and along with Martin Amis and Ian McEwan—the so-called Amis-Barnes-McEwan generation—became the writers associated with the left, the young writers that "first linked by the *New Statesman* and now grouped around *The Guardian* or *Observer*, were likely to be intuitively suspicious of authority in the Thatcher years" (Brooker, 2010: 52). Later in the 1990s, Barnes remained particularly interested in historical and political issues, as he was often willing to publicly express his political views in different interviews, as well as in some of his most prominent political novels, such as *The Porcupine* (1992), and *England, England* (1998). Although Barnes has been regarded as one of the canonical and prestigious, even bourgeois and middle-class writers of his generation, his comments on politics have maintained him on the left of his contemporaries, which will be seen through his analyses and comments about the evolution that New Labour experienced in the late 1990s.

Among Barnes's main political texts concerning the emergence of New Labour, it is necessary to point out *England, England* (1998), a novel that, as I argue elsewhere (Navarro, 2011), represents a satirical illustration of Blair's modernisation of the British national identity, and an incisive hyperbolisation of the artificial creation of national

identities by political elites, such was the case of Blair's "Cool Britannia." However, on this occasion I will use Barnes's collection of essays *Letters from London* (1995) as his most representative text of political criticism in which the novelist, as a correspondent for *The New Yorker*, sharply explores the political landscape of contemporary Britain from "the fall of Margaret Thatcher, the rise and decline of John Major and the emergence of Tony Blair" (Lawson, 1995: 26). In general terms, "Barnes finds the present political and social atmosphere of Britain both toxic and trivial, and a sense of deep distaste pervades his book" (Cockburn, 1995: 32). Barnes's article "Left, Right, Left, Right: The Arrival of Tony Blair" (1995) concretely represents an early contribution to the intellectual scepticism of the time, and conforms one of the wittiest and most sarcastic pieces of essayistic criticism of the newly arrived leader of the Labour Party. In the essay, the author did not only react against the deep transformation that was being applied in the Labour Party, but he also released his most personal and emotional reluctance for the new politician, whose style, religious beliefs and family background made him more a conservative than a progressive socialist. On the one hand, Barnes's bitter criticism of Blair focused on the excessive emphasis given to image in order to win the coming election in 1997, an image that reinforced Blair's likeable, approachable and populist appearance by masking an undefined ideology and his supposed lack of ideas. On the other hand, Barnes's disapproval of the new Labour leader also centred on his modernisation project and his set of reforms that served as the launching pad for a new movement to the right within the Labour Party. In this way, Barnes interpreted the Labour manifesto as a proof of Blair's acquired conservatism:

> The modernizers sought, apart from anything else, to make Labour electable again: this involved smartening the Party up, democratizing its electoral systems, reducing the influence of the trade unions, and accepting a certain amount of market reality. Such activities are regarded by some as classic right-wing middle-class treachery. (Barnes, 1995: 333)

Moreover, Barnes sharpened his sarcasm when describing Blair's modernising project as radical, and those on the left, as conservatives: "Here is Tony Blair during the run-up to the election: 'Many of those that call themselves left aren't on the left at all if left means radical. They simply represent a kind of conservatism'" (333). Blair's radicalism lay, according to Barnes, in precisely going further to the right and associating the *conservative* roots of the Labour Party with traditional socialism. The

author's burlesque contempt for Blair's new concept of socialism stemmed from the Labour leader's enthusiasm for a middle ground and Third Way alternative between communitarianism and individualism:

> His is an ethical socialism, […] based on the necessity of communal action if the individual life is to have its best chance of fulfilment. "The power of all … used for the good of each", as Blair put it in his acceptance speech. "That is what socialism means to me." It still, of course, means something different to the traditionalists in his party. (338)

According to Barnes, Blair's repudiation of the obsolete principles of Old Labour was based on his modernised concept of socialism, and on the rupture of the traditional loyalty of the party with the trade unions, which acknowledged that Blair's purportedly abandonment of social democracy obligatorily provoked social alarm and political conflict. For the author, Labour's rupture with the trade unions was,

> historically heretical. Imagine a Tory leader promising that when his Government came in there would be no special favours for those who contribute to Conservative Party funds; for employers, businessmen and the City; for big landowners, rich people and posh people. (339)

Broadly speaking, the author's essay is ironically and sarcastically entertaining when uttering his apprehension and discontent about what the new Labour leader represents: Blair's excessive value for image, his growing conservatism as understood in his modernising project, his particular concept of socialism, and his radical reforms regarding privatisations, education, trade unions and the appeal of the well-off middle classes eventually detached New Labour from its socialist past. However, and despite all criticism, Barnes conceded that the Labour Party enjoyed political and circumstantial advantage over the Conservative Party, and like many other sceptical intellectuals that criticised Blair's reforms, he also considered Labour the best electoral alternative: "Certainly Mr Blair offers the Labour Party its likeliest chance since 1979 of a return to power. (As, as a further modernizing footnote, his success would put the first working wife into No 10). You would have to be cruel—or Conservative—not to wish him well" (341-342).

Later in 2008, in an interview with Julian Barnes published in *The Buenos Aires Herald* (2008), the author commented on this piece of essayistic criticism. For the

interviewer, Barnes "showed a mixture of hope, fear and uncertainty" regarding the arrival of Tony Blair back in the 1990s (Barnes in Toledo, 2008). Drawing from this assertion, Barnes replied that he initially believed the new Prime Minister "would be more honest than the previous administration but that I thought he would be just as conservative, and I think that has certainly proved the case" (2008). For Barnes, Mrs Thatcher initially seemed an "eccentric" and "hard-line right-wing" transitory politician, but the author later realised that under Blair, Thatcherism had become irreversible:

> In fact, I think none of the fundamental reforms that she introduced have been turned back by Tony Blair, nor indeed by Gordon Brown. I think I misjudged how essentially conservative my country was: when I was growing up and things moved from a vaguely left-wing Conservative to a vaguely right-wing Labour again this was actually a sort of narrow period, a small passage of British politics, and now we are going back to the sort of politics that we had more in the 19th century. The extreme gap between rich and poor is now well in line with Victorian levels if not worse, and people don't seem to mind this. (2008)

Like Barnes, **Margaret Dabble** also believed that the new Labour leader had magnified the importance of his political image, was too conservative in his agenda, and had little aspirations to achieve a fairer society. Drabble thus joined other contemporary figures—who had been particularly dynamic in their political commitment—to early satirise the arrival of Tony Blair. Yet, still under the conservative rule, Drabble was one of those engaged writers who, together with other members of the 20 June Discussion Group such as the Pinters, Salman Rushdie, Ian McEwan, John Mortimer, Fay Weldon, David Hare and Angela Carter, had strong leftist affinities and were determined to overthrow Thatcher's government by organising counter-power actions. Relevant during this decade, Drabble's contribution to committed fiction was manifest in her Thatcher trilogy, with social novels such as *The Radiant Way* (1987), *A Natural Curiosity* (1989), and *The Gates of Ivory* (1991) in which the author exposed the social and political development of her country (Carter and McRae, 1997: 521).

In this line of social criticism, Drabble continued being a writer devoted to social and political causes during successive governments, namely the Blair premiership, by writing for newspapers like *The Guardian* on issues such as education, the NHS, privatisations, the Iraq war, and American imperialism. Still during the mid 1990s, Drabble's novel *The Witch of Exmoor* (1996), "full of Drabble's hot, aggrieved, leftish politics" (Wood, 1997: 330), would be considered a post-Thatcherite novel and a

critique of Thatcher's legacy in terms of the well-grounded capitalism and the irreconcilable inequalities that projected the Just Society as a utopia: the novel depicted "a country Americanised by superstores, by 'ring roads and beefburgers,' fast food and mass travel. The novel feels uncontrolled in its rage. No aspect of contemporary Britain escapes the swivel eye of Drabble's promiscuous revulsion" (330). The novel was a pessimistic portrait of contemporary Britain, a Britain in which there seemed to be no future for social fairness since the new society was ruled by the contemporary tenets of consumerism, luxury and "relative poverty" (Duchene, 1996: 26). Drabble's narrative was therefore a social satire of the failing of the progressive society that became bourgeois and middle-class, and a caricature of the "creeping privatisation" that took place at the end of the Major government and beyond (Drabble, 2011: 44). As Drabble herself admits: "We had already become wary about the selling off of public assets and services into private hands—gas, water, prisons, railways" (44).

It is thus clear that *The Witch of Exmoor* was a political and social critique of the previous decade, and a criticism of Thatcher's legacy that seemed irreversible under the new government; yet, despite being a post-Thatcherite novel, it also introduced "what might be the first, although brief and irrelevant, appearance of Tony Blair in a work of fiction" (Fernández Sánchez, 1999a: 395). In this regard, I would suggest that although at first it might seem "brief and irrelevant," it is no coincidence that the figure of the new Labour leader is for the first time caricatured in a novel about Thatcherism and its legacy. This is precisely a satirical introduction, and prediction of what New Labour turned out to be: for many writers and intellectuals, as will be shown throughout this study, Blair eventually embodied the continuation of the Thatcherite values. The rise of Tony Blair is, in Drabble's novel, a symbolic introduction for what would be later considered the permanent establishment of the market society and the growth of privatisations and social inequalities, which consequently reflected the apparent conservatism of the new Labour Party as an ultimate resort to remain in power. As an exemplification of this tendency, the character David D'Anger, a young politician running for Parliament and son-in-law of the protagonist and writer Frieda Haxby Palmer, is finally elected MP, and his party—the Labour Party—is again in government, which seems to be a relief "for the alternative would have been most unpleasant" (Drabble, 1996: 268). Although David is happy for his party's majority, "he is increasingly disillusioned with party politics and indeed with his own party" (268). Drabble describes a frustrated MP who sees that his party "seems to have moved far

from where it had stood when David, as an ardent student, had first joined it; it is now, as every journalist says five times a week, almost indistinguishable from the opposition" (268).

This is Drabble's criticism of the evolution of the Labour Party, having been a Labour member herself for most of her career, she ended up voting Lib Dems from the late 1990s to present (Drabble, 2005: 25) for the Labour Party seemed to be almost indistinguishable from the opposition. In the novel, David is disappointed to see that "the Just Society recedes over the horizon […] Egalitarianism and redistribution are words to avoid, concepts to deplore" (Drabble, 1996: 269). The Old Labour motto of social justice, egalitarianism and redistribution has now become an obsolete ethic in both real-life New Labour and David's fictional party. Tony Blair's modernisation of the party, accepting neoliberal and conservative measures, assimilated the new Labour policies with the Tory ones, especially in economic terms, thus fostering the intellectuals' frustration in the same way that character David D'Anger is unsatisfied with his party. In this frustration and disappointment, David decides to abandon his media and TV slots, instigating the confrontation with the Leader of the party who inquires "if it's true that David has been turning down TV opportunities […] Yes, says David. That's political suicide, says the Leader, smiling his boyish smile. For me or for the party? inquires David. For you, of course, says the Leader, still smiling" (269). This is Drabble's satirical description of a "telegenic Leader" concerned about TV appearances (269)—now an essential part of the politician's career if he/she wants to keep power—which portrays the then leader of the Labour Party, a Tony Blair obsessed with image and marketing campaigns while ignoring ideological or content-base reforms. Drabble's passage eventually illustrates the most common attacks on Blair during those years: the marketisation of political campaigns, an apparent turn to the right making the party almost *indistinguishable* from the opposition, and the abandonment of social justice, egalitarianism and redistribution, all of which challenged the Old Labour socialist principles.

Independently from any synchronism that might exist between the novel and Drabble's personal political views, the author has often expressed her strong social responsibility and her ideological sympathies, which she describes as "left-of-centre-egalitarian" (Allardice, 2011: 12). For Drabble, although a Labour Party member for most of her career, she gradually became disappointed with and pessimistic about politics: "I don't feel there's a party that represents me now. It's hard to feel that there's

a sense of social progress. I used to feel that we were all moving forward, but we weren't really" (12). In the general election of 1997, Drabble voted for the Lib Dems perhaps realising that Labour was not very Labour (Drabble, 2005: 25), and her political apathy with contemporary politics has evolved towards an aggravated bitterness against the government of Tony Blair in the coming years. Her "uncontrollable anti-Americanism" and her visceral loathing of the United States (Drabble, 2003: 22) later made her a fierce opponent of the Iraq war.

4.1.2 Oppositional Writers during Tony Blair's First Term: Kosovo (1999)

Drabble's anti-Americanism was not an outlying case, other writers of her generation, such as Harold Pinter and Fay Weldon, similarly reacted against the direction taken by Britain's foreign affairs under Blair's premiership. Until 1997, during those pre-Labour years when Blair's project was being constituted, writers and intellectuals had initiated a timid opposition to the emerging modernisation process of the Labour Party. According to the samples shown above, writers focused their early satire on the growing conservatism that could be glimpsed through Blair's speeches and his marketing campaigns, but it was not until he entered Downing Street when intellectuals intensified their criticism. Blair's first term (1997—2001) elicited reactions against his turn to the right on domestic issues, and most specifically, against his role in international affairs, such as the Kosovo war in 1999.

As mentioned in the historical chapter on Blairism, Blair's first tenure would be marked by several achievements in his domestic agenda: the so-acclaimed peace in Northern Ireland in 1998, and the Devolution of power to Scotland and Wales in 1999. However, other decisions became controversial, such as the reinforcement of Britain's special relationship with the US—which continued under Blair—and the particular commitment of the Labour government to the defence of human rights through the moral interpretation of war. Robin Cook's speech in 1997 highlighted the so-called "ethical dimension" of war in order to promote democracy and freedom, and two years later, Blair would emphasise in his Chicago speech (1999) the significance of foreign intervention in order to prevent genocide. The most immediate consequences of this were, first of all, Britain's support for the US's plans in Iraq (1998)—evidently long before the 9/11—and secondly, Blair's insistence on the Kosovo intervention (1999) by instigating a response to President Slobodan Milosevic's ethnic cleansing of the Muslim

majority. The Kosovo affair was contested by the public opinion as a whole, and by British intellectuals who questioned the ethnocentric attitude of Western nations that considered their values and democracy as the model to be exported—even despite the UN rule of non-intervention. With these arguments, intellectual opposition to the Blair government emerged in the early years of New Labour, and some prominent writers angrily reacted against Blair's decision to depose Milosevic.

Activist and playwright **Harold Pinter** had a long trajectory of committed writing and political engagement throughout his lifetime. Given the great amount of instances that bestow upon him the systematic role of engaged public figure by responding back to power and opposing contemporary governments, the importance of such an intellectual cannot be emphasised enough, and any analysis given in this dissertation might underrepresent the committed responsibility that Pinter demonstrated during his last years until his death in 2008. Right from the beginning of his career in the late 1950s and 1960s, Pinter was a political personality, although not necessarily a political playwright: he was very critical of political art, but his social and moral convictions made him a public *persona* denouncing the Vietnam war in the 1960s and the Pinochet regime in the 1970s, and becoming an activist in the campaign for the Nuclear Disarmament Movement (Grimes, 2005: 19; also see Moss, 1999: 6, and Gregory, 1996: 328). His understanding of literature would evidently change in time, and his writing would evolve towards a gradual politicisation at the height of Thatcherism when his plays became intensely political, such was the case of *One for the Road* (1985), *Mountain Language* (1988), *Party Time* (1991) and *Ashes to Ashes* (1996). His personal commitment—especially characterised by his particularly emotional anger and outrage—made him a leader within the intellectual *Zeitgeist*, as he showed when being one of the founding members of the 20 June Discussion Group together with his second wife Antonia Fraser. As Charles Grimes points out, the consequences of Thatcherism made Pinter realise the damage that Thatcher's politics were doing to Britain:

> Margaret Thatcher politicised many who otherwise felt apolitical […] The stridency of Thatcher's government, her willingness to dismantle fundamental aspects of liberal postwar British society, her abandonment of consensus politics, and her antagonisms toward left-wing voices caused many to feel that politics needed to be taken with utmost seriousness. (2005: 21)

However, despite Pinter's fervent left-wing convictions, he demonstrated a traditional detachment from any leftist organised politics—he never used the socialist ideology to criticise social injustice (22)—thus cultivating a position of outsider. In the period of the 1990s and early 2000s, Pinter intensified his political activity as reflected in speeches, letters and the signing of petitions (Baker, 2008: 104), and he used his lectures of acceptance of literary awards—the Wilfred Owen Award for poetry in 2004, the Nobel Prize and the Prague Franz Kafka Prize in 2005, and the Europe Theatre Prize in 2006 (130)—as an opportunity to publicly attack, with outrage and visceral contempt, both the leaders of Britain and the United States who used war and any kind of illegal invasion to defend the values of freedom and justice. Due to Pinter's prolific activism, it is very difficult to draw a detailed analysis of every single piece of his political criticism of the British government, and this is the reason why I will here focus on some samples of his counter-hegemonic appearances and other subversive writings.

Still in the early days of New Labour, Pinter's intensive opposition to what he considered America's imperialist wars made him an insistently nonconformist figure against Britain's support for America in the foreign conflicts it was involved in—Iraq in 1998—and most specifically the British-led invasion in Kosovo in 1999. One of the first political activities of the author was his open letter to Tony Blair in 1998 in relation to the Prime Minister's support for the US involvement in Iraq. Pinter endeavoured to warn against America's obscure international affairs so as to ironically persuade the British Prime Minister to reconsider his special relationship with the American ally. The British writer reminded Blair that

> The United States has supported, subsidised and in a number of cases, engendered every right wing military dictatorship in the world since 1945. […] Hundreds of thousands of people have been murdered by these regimes but the money, the resources, the equipment (all kinds), the advice, the moral support, as it were, has come from successive US administrations. (Pinter, 1998)

Pinter's anti-Americanism was overt in the letter when he stated that it was morally obligatory to remove Britain's loyalty to the US: "I'm sure you would agree that historical perspective is of the first importance and that a proper detachment is a crucial obligation which devolves upon leaders of men" (1998). In this line of criticism, Pinter insisted on his attack on the British government for its unconditional support to the US in a wide range of occasions. Journalist Audrey Gillan, covering an anti-war

street protest for *The Guardian* in 1999 with regards to the war in Kosovo, quoted Harold Pinter, who was present at the demonstration:

> I am sure those people here today who voted the Labour party into power share the same feeling—a deep sense of shame, the shame of being British. Little did we think two years ago that we had elected a government which would take a leading role in what is essentially a criminal act, showing total contempt for the United Nations and international law. (Pinter in Gillan, 1999)

The passage illustrates Pinter's early disenchantment with Blair, and how the author felt betrayed by his government for taking unilateral decisions, breaking the UN rule of non-intervention and leading a war in Kosovo. This was Pinter's out loud rage against his government, a furious reaction against what he considered to be a violation of international law, based on his conviction to speak the truth to power and resist the US hegemony:

> Let us face the truth. The truth is that neither Clinton nor Blair gives a damn about the Kosovar Albanians. This action has been yet another blatant and brutal assertion of US power using Nato as its missile. It set out to consolidate one thing—American domination of Europe. This must be fully recognised and it must be resisted. (1999)

In his other interventions, this time on the TV documentary *Against the War* (1999) broadcasted on BBC 2 and directed by Stuart Urban, Pinter continued his case against the war in Kosovo and against the military action carried out by American and British forces. In his speech, Pinter stated: "It is a bandit action, committed with no serious consideration of the consequences, ill-judged, ill-thought, miscalculated, an act of deplorable machismo" (Pinter in Urban, *Against the War* 1999). Furthermore, the writer accused the media of being manipulative and justifying the invasion by claiming that Milosevic's regime and his ethnic cleansing was the new Holocaust. On this point, critical voices such as Pinter denounced mainstream media for manipulating images and providing convenient evidences to favour the cause of the war. Some marginal journals and other so-labelled anti-globalist publications were responsible for much of the denunciation of purportedly biased information by stating that official correspondents were providing forced evidences to justify the war:

> Army media specialists on the ground and the war correspondents in the field were both victims of the intense propaganda campaigns of NATO's political leaders. […] Most of the media in Western Europe and the United States joined the campaign and quickly moved to promoting war and pressing for violent action to maintain credibility instead of providing reasonably objective information that would contribute to public debate. (Moorcraft and Taylor, 2008: 139)

Pinter considered that an orchestrated machine had been organised to claim the West's duty to intervene, and he subsequently questioned the legitimised discourse that justified the military attack: "We can only intervene, of course, if we have the moral authority ourselves to do so. What is moral authority? What does it come from? How do you achieve it? […] What you have is power. Bombs and power. And that's your moral authority" (Pinter in Urban, *Against the War* 1999). Here, Pinter sharply accused the hypocritical moral position of NATO forces when they defended freedom and democracy by making a supposedly illegal war, which eventually increased civilian casualties and a refugee crisis. In the BBC documentary speech, the author responded to power by deconstructing the established discourse that dictated NATO'S legitimacy to intervene in the name of justice and moral duty, the very same argument that other intellectuals and thinkers, such as Edward Said, used when they criticised the war. For Said, the US and the British forces had egotistical interests when making war, interests that had nothing to do with protecting civilians or punishing a cruel dictator: "Nothing of what the US or Nato does now has anything to do with protecting the Kosovars or bringing them independence: it is rather a display of military might whose long-range effect is as disastrous as a similar policy in the Middle East" (Said, 1999: 19). Said positioned himself by the side of other intellectuals who wanted to make inroads against the war: "It seems to me imperative that the Nato bombing should stop" for "the greatest danger is that more people will be displaced, more lives lost, and more fragmentation occur in places like Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. All this for the US to assert its will and show the world who is the boss" (19).

However, Pinter's opposition to the war in Kosovo exceeded the limits of some of his contemporaries. Whilst many were critical of both the illegitimacy of the invasion and Milosevic's ethnic cleansing, Pinter became a manifest defender of the Serb dictator. Shortly after Milosevic's detention in 2001, the author joined a campaign to free the Serb leader by stating that Milosevic's trial at the International Criminal Court in the Hague was illegal: "Although he believes that Mr Milosevic was 'ruthless and

savage,' he has longed argued that he has been unfairly demonised as the 'butcher of the Balkans'" (Gibbons, 2001: 1). To this, Pinter added that Clinton and Blair should have also been tried for crimes against humanity (1). Pinter's fierce opposition to the British and American governments made him a leading subversive intellectual who was systematically committed to denouncing, with passion and personal conviction, the injustices of Western nations, nations that had, in turn, misused the concepts of "freedom" and "democracy." However, whereas Pinter traditionally stood as a subversive intellectual against injustice and the abuses of power, it seemed that his anti-Americanism and his systematic critique of the established hegemony of the United States and Britain made him too complaisant and indulgent with Milosevic's crimes, which questioned his position as an independent intellectual always opposed to any instance of oppression. For socialist playwright David Edgar, Pinter's wrong views on Milosevic were just an attempt to emphasise that "while everybody knew about communist crimes, US support for rightwing dictatorships was ignored" (Edgar, 2008: 25). In other words, while some regimes are historically criminalised, the abuses of others—namely American imperialism and Britain's unconditional support for the US—are ignored and silenced. Like Edgar, other left-wing critics such as Timothy Garton Ash also opposed Pinter's unconditional support for Milosevic, which questioned his function as an always-independent counter-power voice. According to Garton Ash:

> The answer, I fear, is that he has been blinded in one eye by his longstanding, vehement hatred of what he sees as America's hypocritical, militaristic, imperialist policies and Britain's poodle-like support of them. Remember that this is the man who, shortly before the end of the Cold War, said that Britain was more a colony of America than Czechoslovakia was of the USSR. (1999: 4)

Although not so belligerent as Pinter, feminist novelist and cultural journalist **Fay Weldon** was also remarkably critical of the Kosovo invasion. Having been a social critic and occasional commentator on national and international politics during the 1980s, Weldon continued her analysis of British society during the following decade writing for newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph*, *The New Statesman*, *The Observer*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Guardian*. These essays were reprinted in her book *Godless in Eden* (1999), a cultural picture of Britain from 1996 to 1999 that includes references to contemporary British politics, the state of

feminism in the last decades of the twentieth century, and other generic descriptions of British social life. Her political analyses are of special importance in this dissertation, as they examined the change of government, and the reforms that Tony Blair implemented in his party and in the country as a whole. On this occasion, the extracts under inspection here will be centred on the war in Kosovo and, also in tune with Pinter's criticism, on the supposed manipulation of the media by the governments involved in the war.

Like other intellectuals of her generation committed to the pacifist cause, Weldon opposed the war in Kosovo for considering it a "macho-war" (Weldon, 2000: 52). The humanitarian rationale became the best-selling propaganda that, for some writers and intellectuals, truly masked a conflict rooted in a game of power. For Weldon, "this is the war of Lewinsky's Mouth, of Tony proving his virility. All the electorate-friendly girlie touchy-feeling sentiments gone like a flash: let's show some muscle here!" (49). Weldon suggested that the war was a utilitarian political strategy used by the US as a distraction from the Lewinsky scandal, and by Britain as an opportunity to show its power and influence abroad. For Anne Simpson, Weldon's is "a bitter reflection on a war whose depleted uranium may have permanently poisoned the territory it fought over" (1999: 20). The moral and ethical rationale for the war—defended in the name of humanity, freedom and democracy—was therefore questioned by Weldon when she reminded the public opinion that those rulers the West wanted to eradicate had been imposed by Western countries in the past, thus denouncing the hypocrisy of their appointed and prescribed democracies: "Massive aid will be required to get the country on its feet again, under the ruler we impose. (Democracy being what we say it is, not what you thought it was)" (Weldon, 2000: 51).

Additionally, accusations against these hypocritical democracies sprang from marginal magazines that blamed mainstream media for manipulating information in favour of the war, and several intellectuals such as Pinter and Weldon sponsored these journals' denounciation of what was considered an abuse of truth by the political establishment. Such was the case of the small communist magazine *Living Marxism* (LM) that accused a big corporation, the news source provider Independent Television News (ITN), of distorting the truth about Serbia over the existence or not of some concentration camps in the mentioned country (Vulliamy, 2000: A2). Many British intellectuals joined the LM position with a signature petition to defend freedom of speech, and therefore, the right to denounce what seemed to be an abuse of truth when

big corporations published biased information justifying the attack in Serbia at all costs (Campbell, 2002: 8). Among those intellectual voices that supported LM were Fay Weldon, Doris Lessing, Harold Evans and Toby Young (Vulliamy, 2000: A2), all of whom, along with other thinkers such as Noam Chomsky, claimed that the journal had the right to demand that journalists and photographers were faithful to the truth of the war, thus accusing certain media of fabricating and falsely interpreting images and information (Dodd, 2000: A33). In this context, the role of these intellectuals was that of appealing to the right of freedom of speech on behalf of the LM stand and supporting this marginal publication whose intention was to expose the falsities that, in its editor's view, were being perpetrated by mainstream corporations, namely the ITN. For these intellectuals, as Weldon stated, "someone has to be a dissenting voice" (Weldon in Walden, 1999: 60).

However, whereas for some liberal intellectuals their position was to defend the truth of the war and denounce what they thought to be the atrocities of the NATO forces in Kosovo, as well as the media manipulation, for others, the LM case "would become a matter for voguish tittle-tattle among bored intellectuals on the sofas of the Groucho Club" (Vulliamy, 2000: A2). This common criticism holds that intellectuals publicly join left-wing causes from a privileged position and from their ivory tower, and stand by the voiceless or disadvantaged just to preserve the liberal aesthetic that, as explained above in this chapter, makes these thinkers popular progressive figures.

4.1.3 Reflections on Early Critical Writers

During the early years of Blairism, the writers' criticism was not aggressively adverse towards the Labour candidate, perhaps as a consequence of what many analysts have identified as the apathy of the intellectual at the end of the twentieth century and the exhaustion of the political convulsion of the previous decade. Many of the operating voices of the 1990s had been the writers associated with the left during the 1980s: writers such as Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, Margaret Drabble, Harold Pinter and Fay Weldon were part of the literary establishment that had been particularly revulsive against the Thatcher government, and were the very same voices that continued analysing the political and cultural conditions of the following decade. As has been shown, the early representations of Blair both in literature and in different opinion essays previous to the 1997 general election broadly concurred in their burlesque and

caricaturing intention to reveal what probably Blair himself did not explicitly admit: that his reforms, which detached the Labour Party from its socialist past, were simultaneously approaching the party to its conservative rival, or as Margaret Drabble had stated, that the Labour Party was becoming almost *indistinguishable* from the opposition.

These writers embodied the incipient criticism during the rise of New Labour, but as mentioned above, they were writers of the literary establishment who were, in turn, criticised for their privileged position and for being detached from the reality of the working classes that they claimed to defend. As a matter of fact, it is not surprising that Harold Pinter, for instance, despite his humble origins became a bourgeois writer during the 1980s; and Margaret Drabble, although a lifelong member of the Labour Party, was also defined as a bourgeois middle-class writer (Zeppetello, 2002: 102). Martin Amis, for his part, similarly gathered criticism as regards his growing conservatism despite his initial position by the liberal intelligentsia, in the same way that Fay Weldon and Julian Barnes also belonged to the middle-class establishment. Consequently, should these writers be considered real intellectuals? Given the contradictions that are inherent to these figures of the establishment—these well-off and privileged writers who support a left-wing ideology—it is necessary to analyse their role as intellectuals not in terms of their origins or social position, but in terms of their functionality and attitude when criticising and opposing power. As Edward Said stated, it is not the social position of the writer what defines him or her as an intellectual, "it is a spirit in opposition, rather than in accommodation, that grips me because the romance, the interest, the challenge of intellectual life is to be found in dissent against the status quo" (Said, 1996: xvii). For Said, intellectuals have to be politically engaged figures and counter-power leaders who are willing to guide anti-authority struggles by working within the society they belong to. They have to speak the truth to power with relative independence as peripheral voices and maintain their critical detachment in order to contest power, all this bearing in mind that intellectuals are also human beings that belong to the society in which they live and are not exempt from social pressures. That is Said's relative independence, the relative independence of the writer who publicly reacts and opposes power within society and within the system to which he/she belongs. These middle-class intellectuals should not be judged by their social position, but instead by their attitudes and spirits in opposition when responding to power. It will be therefore the premise of their

functionality as counter-hegemonic voices what will determine these writers' role as intellectuals.

From this perspective, were the writers above mentioned real counter-power voices during Tony Blair's premiership? According to their subversive functionality, these writers effectively contributed with satirical texts to the depiction of Blair's modernisation process and his ideological revisionism, which puts them in a nonconformist position with regards to the gradual conservatism of Blair's reforms. However, it is not possible to understand these writers' opposition to power in the same grade of subversive reaction, for their distinct styles and degree of political commitment was also different in every individual case. It is necessary to make here an important distinction between the activism of Harold Pinter and the one of his contemporaries. Whereas writers such as Julian Barnes, Margaret Drabble and Fay Weldon became frequent commentators of the politics of their country in several national newspapers and in different interviews, Pinter's systematic anti-authority struggle overshadows any critical attack on Blair's government by his fellow writers. While it has been a challenge to find instances of political criticism by these contemporary writers in those pre-1997 years—some of them as secondary appearances in novels, in minor interviews or far distant publications—Pinter's visibility as a leading subversive voice was unmistakable, as the author systematically contributed to current controversial debates by increasing political tension with his declarations. It is important to bear in mind that Pinter's counter-power reactions began to take place once Blair had been elected Prime Minister, a period that was gradually prone to incite the intellectuals' disapproval of his decisions. Being New Labour in a position of power after 1997, intellectuals progressively became more aggressive in their attacks on the government, and their initial political apathy and simple satire resulted, as will be shown in the rest of this chapter, in a passionate aversion towards the Blairite hegemony.

Pinter was precisely the kind of intellectual who fought to counteract the established power and overthrow its hegemony by denouncing the instances in which situations of power were taking place, all with the ultimate aim to achieve a social change. This kind of leading intellectual, committed to a political cause and fully aware of his political responsibility—what Gramsci called the organic intellectual—was there to instigate a struggle against power. Pinter's absolute contempt for the abuse of authority by powerful democracies such as Britain was manifest in his denunciation of the role that mainstream media performed in the justification of the Kosovo war. Pinter

and other writers such as Fay Weldon criticised the manipulation of information—images specifically—by important news corporations that made propaganda in favour of the war. What was considered a radical position of these intellectuals served, to a certain extent, as an attempt to defend the veracity of the information published on the war, but most importantly, the freedom of speech of some marginal newspapers, such as *Living Marxism*, that were trying to counteract the official versions of the war. The function of these intellectuals when supporting LM was aimed to denounce what they considered unfair, and to publicly expose the manipulation of truth by those in power. This was, using the Foucauldian terminology, a means to neutralise the established or erudite knowledge with the subjugated or unrecognised knowledges in order to debilitate the unquestionable authority of Western countries or renowned media. Additionally, as Said also stated in his *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994), the real intellectual had to make embarrassing questions and name instances of injustice that were normally silenced and ignored in order to eventually challenge the status quo. Pinter's categorical criticism, his outrageous sentiment and his need to denounce injustice made him a clear oppositional force and a model of the intellectual resistance contrary to the shames of the West—and specifically of Blair's politics—thus causing controversy and political tension, and disturbing the established discourse.

However, Pinter's unconditional support for Milosevic and his absolute anti-Americanism—that ultimately led the writer to overlook the dictator's crimes—was broadly reprimanded by other left-wing intellectuals who questioned Pinter's role as an oppositional voice systematically resisting any instance of oppression. In this regard, it is necessary to remember Foucault's pledge for intellectuals to be always opposed to power abuse and independent from any regime of thought or any ideological influence that might turn into power. Pinter's sometimes irrational hatred for Blair and the then President of the United States Clinton resulted in a seemingly blind support for Milosevic, which eventually challenged the author's position as an independent thinker systematically opposed to every instance of oppression.

4.2 MID-TERM CRITICISM (2001—2005)

When Blair came to office in 1997, he was widely acclaimed as one of the most popular prime ministers, but since then and throughout his first and second terms, disillusion was making itself felt among British society and many intellectuals. The Prime Minister's decisions on domestic affairs, his new style in the management of public services—endorsing Public Private Partnerships—some fundraising scandals, and the Iraq war eventually cost him Labour votes and several parliamentarian rebellions that contrasted with the enthusiasm that pervaded all social spheres during Blair's early years. In the beginning, Blair seemed to

> [step] forward as standard-bearer for a new candor and decency, a man who would move Labour away from dogmatic socialism while avoiding the Tories' meanspiritedness. He would cleave to the Atlantic alliance while re-engaging with Europe. He would reform public services while encouraging a vigorous competitive economy. Above all, he was a man the British could trust. (Wheatcroft, 2004: 58)

However, by 2001 Blair prioritised wealth creation over redistribution, the free market, and a close alliance with the United States that ended in a very much-criticised war in Iraq. All this damaged Blair's prestige and his legacy, and discredited the government's legitimacy and reputation. Disenchantment was then a fact among supporters:

> Still, the luster has faded. In the too-oft-quoted words of the Tory politician Enoch Powell, "All political careers end in failure." Although that may be an exaggeration, it's true that many perhaps most political leaders disappoint their followers. In Blair's case the disillusionment has been very bitter, and the most telling voices are not of those, left or right, who always disliked him but of those who once deeply admired him. (58)

4.2.1 Writers Against New Labour's Second-Term Domestic Policy

Many writers of the time began to express their open disenchantment with the government at the beginning of Blair's second term. Playwright Alistair Beaton declared to *The Guardian* that he had received New Labour with enthusiasm in 1997, but now after Labour's first term in office, he felt betrayed by the party and its performance in Number 10:

> I shall again vote Labour in the next election. But I cannot deny that I feel cheated. This is not a left/right issue. I don't have a great deal of sympathy for the dreary hymns of old Labour socialism. But quite simply, New Labour became so good at coming to power, it didn't know what to do once it got there. (Beaton, 2001: 14)

Likewise, playwright David Hare acknowledged that "an awful lot is going wrong with this government, in terms of educational, asylum and foreign policy" for it was supposed to be the government of the public services and the underprivileged, and eventually supervised the private and the middle classes (Hare, 2003: 34). In this line of discouragement, other literary voices raised against the outcome of Blair's New Labour, such was the case of **Sue Townsend**, who was a particularly active intellectual during the Thatcherite 1980s with her best-selling Adrian Mole series—novels that housed a humorous message of the historical and political developments of the country. Under New Labour, she continued her satirical depiction of British politics by frequently emphasising her disenchantment with the Labour government and her aversion to Tony Blair, views that were explicitly disclosed in interviews, political pamphlets, journalistic columns, and the majority of her Blairite novels like *Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years* (1999), *Number Ten* (2002), *Adrian Mole and the Weapons of Mass Destruction* (2004), and *Adrian Mole: The Prostrate Years* (2009). According to the author, Blairism seemed to have turned into a political frustration and a betrayal of the principles of the party, a perception that stemmed from Townsend's well-known working-class background, her humble beginnings, and her strong convictions of what Labour should have been, but was not: "I am a passionate socialist, […] but, God, I can't stand them now. I support the memory and the history of the party and I consider that these lot are interlopers" (Townsend in Clark, 2009: 12). In 1997, she was a sceptical New Labour supporter, but as Blair's programme took shape in time, her assessments on the party and the government evolved; as she stated, her metaphoric "marriage" to the Labour Party was idyllic and encouraging in the beginning, but the performance of the Labour Party in office changed her views. Townsend's disenchantment with the New Labour project, especially with regards to Blair's approach to public services (health and education), increased in time, which served to withdraw her support from the party and denounce what she considered to be Blair's betrayal:

> Like any young bride I thought how New Labour would change once we were married; but I was wrong. New Labour flirted and eventually got into bed with public-private partnerships. New Labour used words in a new way: to baffle and confuse. Spinning no longer meant squeezing the moisture out of wet clothes in a washing machine, it was a polite form of lying. The divorce was inevitable. (Townsend, 2005)

It would be during Blair's second term when Townsend's disillusion with the management of public services was more acute, which was explicitly reflected in her novel *Number Ten* (2002). As a political satirist and social commentator, Townsend depicted the social consequences of Blair's political project describing how New Labour had eventually determined individual lives and ordinary culture. In the novel, the parallels between Townsend's characters and New Labour's protagonists are unequivocal: a New Labour Prime Minister called Edward Clare, whose characterisation inevitably resembles that of Tony Blair, stages a humanised political satire of a politician rendered innocent, clumsy and idealist who, ignoring the real state of his own country, becomes completely engrossed in statistical percentages and governmental reform Acts; and yet, he has little knowledge of ordinary people and ordinary lives. The Prime Minister suddenly realises that he hardly knows his country: "Prime Minister, there has been much comment in the media, and this has been backed up by recent polls, that you have lost touch with the realities of daily life. Can you still call yourself the people's Prime Minister?" (Townsend, 2002: 51). That will tempt Edward Clare to tour Britain and, disguised himself in his wife's clothes and in company of Jack Sprat, the policeman at the door of Number 10, to discover or re-discover the common people's lives and their needs. Edward and Jack will evidently travel in public transport, learn about the people's opinion of the New Labour government, shop at "Marks & Spencer," use the National Health Service, and even witness the real state of the British working class at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This adventure shows the Prime Minister his own naivety about the condition of England as well as the precarious state of public services, which will eventually make him sympathise with the suffering of the poor and the immigrants. In that sense, this cultural representation illustrates

> Public services in crisis, communities debased through crime and drugs, low aspirations perpetuating poverty, politicians out of touch, children ill-treated in

> poor households and marginalised in rich ones. It is a forceful portrayal of a dismal scene, of a society with its values upside down. (Widdecombe, 2002: 19)

In this depressing picture of Britain, "Edwina" immerses herself in the crowds and recognises the faults in the British public transport system: delays, unexpected incidents, lack of seating spaces in the stations, and very expensive and inefficient services. As one of Townsend's characters states: "I paid £130 for my ticket and I'm still sitting here, after five hours, with no announcements, no assistance from the staff. In fact, no staff" (Townsend, 2002: 82). Moreover, the Prime Minister also experiences the decadent state of the National Health Service when he suddenly suffers a heart attack and is taken to hospital. He finds the waiting room of the emergency department full of patients who queue at the "Assessment Nurse" door. The scenario seems to be appalling: elderly people waiting for hours without assistance as a consequence of the shortage of nurses and staff. Townsend's criticism of the New Labour performance is evident, particularly when she depicts characters who are disappointed with their government, and who "would never vote Labour again" (235). Even Edward's son, Morgan, is one of the Prime Minister's fiercest critics: a convinced socialist and admirer of Aneurin Bevan and the Old Labour, he "ha[s] become a sort of martyr of the left" (173) and believes that Public Private Partnerships "are a proven disaster. […] National and regional devolution and PPPs increasingly absolve central government from responsibility when things go wrong, but allow them to claim the credit when things go right" (219). Despite the Prime Minister's recently acquired confrontation with reality, he does not truly experience an epiphany: in the very end, he still insists that the people are not able to appreciate the government's efforts to improve society.

Such depiction of the Prime Minister is Townsend's deeply-felt dislike for Tony Blair: "He's a decent bloke who's worked like a dog and he just made the mistake of trying to run a country without having any politics" (301). Townsend's satire is a political tale, a broad and thorough fictional representation of the opposition to the Blair government with innocence and naivety: "Boiling and evisceration would have helped, but Townsend is clearly kind and sympathetic, inclined to judge policies by their effect on individual lives" (O'Brian, 2002: 22). Hers is an intelligent and humorous description of the politician's faults and his ignorance of the people's culture, a caricature of British politics in a *Guignol*-like representation with certain bits of pity and compassion when the people, who voted for Labour in 1997, seem to be now

furious and feel betrayed and disappointed with their politicians. The novel shows this general feeling of hopelessness in British politics and satirises the decadent state of the British nation.

Although for some critics her satire is "soft criticism" (Lindner, 2004: 8), for others, "her satire is never subtle" (Hattersley, 2002: 28); but in any case, all analysts seem to agree that—and in tune with the argument of this dissertation—"Townsend's devilishly subversive new novel does more than make gentle mockery of the current British Prime Minister; it quietly takes him and the effects of his domestic policies to the cleaners" (Lindner, 2004: 8). It seems that despite Townsend's "picaresque format" and her innocent and sympathetic portrait of Tony Blair, there is an ultimate aim of "diminishing his reputation" (8), as well as effectively denouncing Blair's unfulfilled promises and his lack of "responsibility for the humble and the vulnerable in his care" (Holden, 2002: 52). The novel therefore embodies Townsend's disappointment with politics in general, and with New Labour in particular; as she has declared in several occasions, "I now fully realise that Tone will never truly understand what socialism is or was" (Townsend, 2001b: 7), for "the very poor are getting poorer, and nobody seems to care" (2001a: 13). This is Townsend's political commitment to socialism and the working class, not only as is portrayed in *Number Ten*, but also as described in the rest of her novels, thus demonstrating a systematic political commitment, a tireless denunciation of the injustices of her time, and an angry defence of the poor and the unrepresented. As she has stated: "I am a propagandist. I've been bitterly hurt by class in my life" (in Brar, 2009).

Moreover, Townsend has also been considered the kind of political writer "who has never lost touch with her working-class roots" (Lindner, 2004: 8), a "lifelong socialist" who has "made no secret of her disappointment in New Labour" (Kellaway, 2014: 54). Despite becoming a celebrity and making a fortune with her best-selling novels, "the money did not bring about any change of heart. She lived in a Victorian vicarage outside Leicester and championed the city (she also bought two pubs that would otherwise have closed down)" (54). Townsend was a political writer in all the senses, not only for every single piece of her fiction having a political message, but also because she insistently expressed her political views by lividly denouncing the instances in which the Labour government misbehaved. She was the kind of committed intellectual who, despite her social accommodation, kept her spirit in opposition in order to challenge the status quo (Said, 1996: xvii). She was a systematic rebel against

injustice, which led her oppose the party that had inspired her socialism: her evident disappointment with New Labour's modernisation and its abandonment of socialist principles turned her into one of Blair's fiercest critics. In this sense, she was the kind of intellectual whose social awareness and her considered responsibility with the working class maintained her loyal to the principles of the class she claimed to represent, and to the "organic interests" that Gramsci defended had to be promoted and protected by those "organic intellectuals" who led counter-hegemonic struggles. These were the organic intellectuals who had the moral duty to remain faithful to "the essential demands of the popular masses" (Gramsci, 1971: 61), and, as Townsend seems to have demonstrated throughout her career until her death in 2014, she was a systematic counter-power voice that, loyal to the social principles she claimed to defend, opposed her own party when it suddenly betrayed the working class and turned its back to the poor.

Like Sue Townsend's pessimistic views on Britain, other writers also contributed to the intellectual opposition to the government with their critical perceptions of Blair's domestic affairs. This was the case of **Jonathan Coe**, a writer whose political novels—i.e. *A Touch of Love* (1989), *What a Carve Up!* (1994), *The Rotter's Club* (2001), and *The Closed Circle* (2004)—had been particularly scathing about Thatcherism and later Blairism. During the early 2000s, Coe publicly condemned Blair's policies, and despite his optimism back in 1997 about the future prospects of New Labour, he became widely disappointed with the Prime Minister's policies and decisions. In several interviews, Coe was very critical about the Blair project for considering it a recognised continuation of Thatcherism:

> I think most people in Britain believe that now. And in many ways they're sort of reconciled to it. Various words have been expunged from the New Labour vocabulary, nobody talks about socialism anymore. All the old fashioned ideas about redistribution of wealth, taxation have been thrown out the window, and really it's a party which believes in the free market and the global economy, and sort of purports to manage that economy with slightly more caring dimension, slightly more of a social conscience than Mrs Thatcher ever showed. There is no essential difference between the politics of the two parties, economically. […] The Conservative Party in many ways is more left-wing than the Labour Party now. (Coe, 2006)

Coe's views that Blairism had signified a drastic transformation of the principles of the party and his perception that New Labour's recently acquired conservatism approached Thatcher's dogma instigated the author's disenchantment and frustration with contemporary politics. This mood is therefore present in his novel *The Closed Circle* (2004), a novel that illustrates the pessimism, disappointment, and frustration of the day (Poole, 2004: 23; Turner, 2005: 23). Nevertheless, and despite the beliefs of some critics (see Johnson, 1995) who thought that intellectuals under Blair were more characterised by pessimism than by subversive outrage, I here join voices such as Jessica Winter who defend that behind an apparent frustration there was, at least in Coe's novel, a restrained anger for current political issues. According to Winter, Coe is trying to provide a diagnosis of "the causes and symptoms of that repressed rage" (2005). Stephen Bernstein also agrees that "the book is rich with Coe's characteristic humour, and with a slow-burning anger as well, anger at the ways in which individuals, communities, and nations are manipulated for corporate and political gain" (2006: 151). The author's criticism and rage against Blairism thus centres on several "closed circles." On the one hand, there is a constant feeling in the novel that Blairism, understood as a consequence of Thatcherism, represented the closing legacy of the conservative rule. Since Thatcher's effects seemed to be irreversible, there were no longer distinctions between political parties or ideologies; it seemed to be like a closed circle in which contemporary politics was insubstantial, circumstantial and mostly conservative. On the other hand, Coe's second target lay on the close relationship that existed and that was promoted by the government with the media, a closed circle where the power of government and the power of the media were intertwined and mutually dependent on one another. It will be, however, the former aspect what will be analysed in this study.

Coe's illustration of Britain's growing conservatism is carried out in two narrative phases, as *The Closed Circle* was designed to be the continuation of Coe's early book *The Rotters' Club* (2001), which is a depiction of the Thatcherite reality. *The Closed Circle* was thus conceived as a criticism of Blairism in a metaphoric and metanarrative depiction of it as the continuation of Thatcherism, and correspondingly, as the continuation of his earlier novel. In this way, the characters experience an evolution in two different ages of British history, their adolescence in the Britain of the 1980s, and their adulthood under the Blair government, an ultimate strategy to highlight, on the one hand, the contrast between both eras, and on the other, the fact that contemporary Britain and contemporary British politics are the result of the sometimes called

"Thatcherite Revolution." The novel illustrates irreversible social changes and the closing of a political era in which Thatcher's reforms have become permanent under the rule of Tony Blair. It seems that Coe's intention is to stress the picture of New Labour as a right-wing party, and with that aim in mind, the character Paul Trotter—who initially was "half a comic right-wing little brother, given to reading Milton Friedman in his bath, and half a sinister chorus figure: 'The death of the socialist dream'" (Turner, 2005: 23)—now becomes a Labour MP who, in private, defends neoliberalism and privatisations, some intimate conservative instincts that he has to repress in public, since

> He knew that the people who had voted him in had certain expectations of a Labour administration, and that many of his own personal convictions, if he were to state them frankly and publicly, would have shocked them, inspired them with a profound sense of disquiet and betrayal. […] [He] was beginning to grate. He was getting restless, and hungry for change: rapid, radical change. (Coe, 2008: 43)

Thanks to Trotter, the reader glimpses this air of "betrayal" that many people said to experience under Labour, since the government, and the party, had radically changed. The New Labour of the Public Private Partnerships was the new party of privatisations, those privatisations that Paul Trotter is so keen to accomplish:

> That afternoon, it had been announced to the press that responsibility for safety on the railways was going to be handed over to Railtrack—a privately run company—rather than to an independent and publicly accountable body as many critics had been demanding. Paul basically approved of this idea (all of his political instincts inclined him towards the private sector) and had been happy to say so on the record, believing that this would make him popular with the party leadership. (49)

The New Labour that is represented in *The Closed Circle* embraces politicians whose ideals and principles gravitate towards privatisations. Workers and the labour movement, on the contrary, are surprisingly hindered by the government's new policies. The case of the railway privatisation and the closure of the Land Rover factory in Birmingham are two examples of the novel's historical contextualisation, which are used to show the indifference and passivity of New Labour with workers. In Coe's novel, the government does nothing to save jobs (89) provoking a crowded anti-government demonstration in Birmingham that is somehow reminiscent of the strikes under the rule of Thatcher; this accentuates the image of New Labour as a right-of-

centre party that stirs up labour conflicts and social unrest. Doug Anderton, the political commentator and analyst in the novel, reports the protest as follows:

> The chanting never seemed to stop, and after a while it became hypnotic, like a classic piece of trance: "Tony Blair, Shame on You! Shame on You for Turning Blue!" […] The city saw not only its own biggest demonstration since the 1970s, but one of Britain's most significant expressions of mass protest since Mrs Thatcher's confrontations with the striking miners. (110)

As this excerpt shows, Blair's politics and his anti-labour measures appeared as the reminiscences of Thatcher's legacy, a heritage that now seemed irreversible, like a closed circle. In this sense, Coe finds that the welfare consensus established in the second half of the twentieth century has been replaced by the market society, and the consensus of the business class:

> If governments in the past, of both major political parties, have been drawn towards "rescuing" a company in difficulties, we see our role now as helping to equip people and business for the new economy, as encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship, as improving education and training and as broadening access to new technology. (123)

These words now look familiar, the new economy of the entrepreneurship, and the society of the new technology… "the usual New Labour bollocks" (123), states Doug, "I mean if the public ever got to hear what he [Paul/Blair] really thinks—well, they'd realise. Because most of them still believe that they've voted in a left-wing party. Whereas really they've just voted for another five years of Thatcherism" (130). The author recurrently foregrounds the idea of Blair being Margaret Thatcher's heir, and Blairism being the continuation of Thatcherism; yet, what kind of society had provoked Labour's alignment with the right? Had conservatism grown in the last years or was it deeply entrenched in the political instincts of this country? The left had turned right, the British National Party was winning voters, and the right was now turning to the left: political parties were now indistinguishable from the opposition, what was wrong in society? "The entire system nowadays is only geared to accommodating a tiny minority of political opinion. The left's moved way over to the right, the right's moved a tiny bit to the left, the circle's been closed and everyone else can go fuck themselves" (139). The political spectrum appeared colour blind and the parties did not seem to be identified with ideologies any more, "the circle had been closed," the right was not right

and the left was not left, this blurring of political parties prompted ideological chaos and a pastiche of insubstantial ideals and principles: "There didn't seem to be a difference between the two perspectives any more, between anybody's perspectives" (273).

In view of the above, Coe's narrative is openly critical of the Labour years, with the representation of Labour politicians, as well as with the Prime Minister himself. The author's satire provides a metaphor to expose not only the growing conservatism of the Labour Party in recent years, but also the feeling that contemporary politics is no longer about moral beliefs and sense of justice, but mainly about power, personal ambitions, intertwined interests, business, wealth, political lying and the marketisation of a political product. As Pamela Thurschwell explains, Coe's novels express "the sense of helplessness that large-scale political and economic forces engender in people; and each individual's potentially catastrophic confrontation with a historical situation he or she cannot control and can barely begin to understand" (2006: 28). It seems that for Coe, the fate of the individual is strongly influenced by power "because power is invested in the hands of a very few, who pull the strings and control the puppet show" (Thurschwell, 2006: 35). In this respect, Coe's novel is an example of how writers endeavoured to disclose the shames of a government that always rendered itself sensible, socially aware, and sympathetic with both the poor and the business class, while it was really pretending, playing the role to please everyone and being intrinsically conservative and profoundly anti-social. This is the writer's counter-power message, a message that attempts to write back to power and deconstruct the established discourse and the established truth.

However, despite the fact that Coe has been granted with the recognition of political writer, author Lawrence Driscoll contends that Coe's novels, simply because they are "somehow anti-Thatcher [or anti-Blair] does not automatically make it a novel that is in anyway socialist" (Driscoll, 2009: 157). For Driscoll, Jonathan Coe and many other apparently subversive writers of the time have been particularly systematic in their opposition to power, and concretely to the conservative hegemony of the Thatcher-Blair era; yet, Driscoll adds, Coe's nonconformist opposition and his political criticism does not make him a radical intellectual of the left, as he has indeed been branded as writer of the establishment and a middle class representative very much detached from the working-class reality (157). In fact, Driscoll maintains, Coe's novels essentially reproduce and reinforce the culture of the middle class, its values and its position behind their apparent political subversiveness: "Coe's textual function is not to

politically undermine Thatcherism [and Blairism] from a socialist perspective, but to simply restore the culture to a middle class, decent, honourable centre" (158). As happened with other of Coe's novels (*What a Carve Up*!), "although it is certainly true that the novel is concerned with these [political and moral] issues, we cannot assume that it has magically escaped from bourgeois ideology" (160). Therefore, analyses of Coe as a "radically subaltern and subversive author" seemed to obviate that he is rather "a highly successful Cambridge educated author" (161). For Driscoll, Coe and other of his contemporaries are too middle-class despite their attempts to show otherwise in their social and political critiques: "These authors have managed to continue a tradition whereby the middle class novel maintains an aesthetic and a form that ensures the erasure of any dialectical critique of class while appearing to offer it up for critical scrutiny" (27). There is, for Driscoll, no radicalism in Coe.

Nevertheless, in order to counteract Driscoll's views on writers such as Coe, it is necessary to admit that, as Driscoll has stated and as the novelist himself has admitted on some occasions, Coe is a writer and not a radical activist: "I have great admiration for writers like Arundhati Roy who concentrate on being political activists. But I have chosen to write" (Coe in Cox, 2002). There is no doubt that Coe is an intellectual located within a middle-class environment who speaks from a bourgeois status, which eventually distances him from the reality of those deprived sectors of the British society that, in the novelist's view, were suffering the effects of the Blair reforms, thus questioning his radical activism. Coe does not belong to the class that he claims to defend in his interviews or novels, being very difficult to label the novelist as the kind of "organic intellectual" Gramsci stated had to be intrinsically linked and attached to the class he/she represented. However, and in tune with the argument of this dissertation, it is necessary to be more inclusive when estimating the value and the function of British writers when they create counter-power texts and when they offer counter-hegemonic discourses with their narratives. In this particular case, Coe's coherence in his always critical views on the Blair government and his systematic opposition to the abuses of the Labour Party when being in power definitely make him not a radical activist, but an oppositional writer, a writer who, by exposing the unacknowledged versions of history and the silenced stories, attempts to debilitate and deconstruct the established and official versions of truth exposed by the government. This is not only interpreted from the fact that all his novels are profoundly political and that he has released his political views in different interviews or public statements, but mostly because his direct satire

and his categorical attack on Blair's conservatism has been explicit in every instance of his narrative. Having said that, it also seems to be true that despite Coe's counter-power discourse present in his texts, it is questionable to classify the writer as an openly enraged activist willing to leave his middle-class comfort zone in order to change social reality.

4.2.2 Reactions to the Iraq War

Several writers, organically committed to changing the direction their country was taking both in domestic and foreign affairs, headed up the infuriated voices that opposed the government's decisions. It was the Iraq war, during Blair's second term, that was the precise turning point and the eventual catalyst that provoked "this broad-spectrum disillusionment" (Kelly, Stuart 2008: 53), thus inciting British intellectuals to organise their subversive reactions and exert political pressure on Blair in order to avoid, or stop the war. The conflict brought about unprecedented intellectual opposition and innumerable critical productions as reflected in novels, plays, essays, interviews and public statements, all of which described the atmosphere of popular dissidence against the invasion, and the rage that the war evoked in the British intelligentsia.

The war became the intellectuals' top priority in their attack on the government. Due to the vast material that exists on the issue, it is impossible to include all the critical samples written and signed by British intellectuals in their rejection of this war. As such, I will make reference to some of the most relevant pieces of fiction and non-fiction that dealt with the war. To start with, it is essential to point out the debate promoted by the website ***openDemocracy*** in 2003, entitled "Writers, Artists and Civic Leaders on the War," to which a total of fifty-five thinkers (writers, critics, philosophers, academics and analysts) contributed their views on the controversy of the time.[53] Among the names that stand out in the list—and those who criticised and opposed world leaders George W. Bush and Tony Blair—were the British novelist John Le Carré, philosopher and novelist Roger Scruton, playwright David Hare, Scottish poet

[53] *openDemocracy* is a website founded in May 2001 to promote international debates on political issues and defend human rights and democracy: It "champions human rights, seeks out and debates forms of democratic change, supports pluralist inclusion without populism and tries to give a voice to those marginalised" (*openDemocracy* website). One of its founders, Anthony Barnett, had already been a remarkable thinker during the Thatcher years, leading Charter 88 and being a committee member of the *New Left Review*.

Edwin Morgan, professor Paul Gilroy, writer and playwright Rukhsana Ahmad, writer and artist Ruha Al-Radi, writer Judith Williamson, the Portuguese writer José Saramago and Timothy Garton Ash. Their contributions were explicit about the wave of anti-Americanism that the war in Iraq had provoked worldwide, and Blair, as Bush's best ally, became their second target. Common claims by these intellectuals recalled the already mentioned American greed for oil supplies, the Anglo-American hypocritical argument of establishing freedom and democracy, the shame for their government's actions, the tyranny of unilateral decisions, the illegitimacy of the war, and Bush and Blair's arrogance, as well as their messianic attitude (*openDemocracy*, 2003: Parts I and II). However, in this intense debate, other intellectuals actually supported the war. Salman Rushdie, for instance, concurred with the need to overthrow Saddam Hussein as well as other oppressive regimes, even though he disliked America's arguments. Similarly, Ian McEwan confessed his ambivalence for the war when recalling the exploitations of the dictator's regime (*openDemocracy*, 2003: Part I). In addition, other writers including Arnold Wesker, Philip Bobbitt, Sonja Linden, journalist Hazhir Teimourian and editor David Hayes also perceived that the war was an opportunity to defend human rights and protect the Iraqi people (Parts I and II).

Among the critical voices, **Harold Pinter** stood out as a fierce opponent. Although he did not participate in the *openDemocracy* debate, Pinter contributed extensively to the intellectual resistance against occupation. His controversial laureate lecture, given when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2005, became an iconic representation of the outrage of liberal thinkers that passionately reacted against what they considered to be exploitation on the part of the United States and Britain. In his speech, Pinter attacked Bush and Blair for their ambition of power, their systematic abuse of authority, and their hatred for universal truth when attempting to fuel ignorance as a means to conserve their hegemony:

> The majority of politicians, on the evidence available to us, are interested not in truth but in power and in the maintenance of that power. To maintain that power it is essential that people remain in ignorance, that they live in ignorance of the truth, even the truth of their own lives. What surrounds us therefore is a vast tapestry of lies, upon which we feed. (Pinter, 2007: 20)

The Nobel Lecture, in its attempt to denounce political lying and abuse of power, promptly focused on the Iraq war as an example of the urgency to search for truth. It included explicit blame of the United States and Britain for making an illegal war that turned, in Pinter's view, into an offence against international law, and was based on lies that suggested that Saddam possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction and maintained connections with al-Qaeda: "It was not true. The truth is something entirely different. The truth is to do with how the United States understands its role in the world and how it chooses to embody it" (21). The author's accusation underlined the unrecorded crimes of countries such as the United States that have "carte blanche to do what it liked" (21), and Britain, that became a "bleating little lamb […] the pathetic and supine Great Britain" (26). This was Pinter's scornful criticism of his own country, questioning Britain's patriotic morality when collaborating in the atrocities of other nations: "What has happened to our moral sensibility? Did we ever have any? What do these words mean? Do they refer to a term very rarely employed these days—conscience? A conscience to do not only with our own acts but to do with our shared responsibility in the acts of others?" (26). Pinter accused Britain of cooperating in a political plot as the Iraq war was understood, because it was eventually an illegal invasion induced by political manipulation and political lying, as well as an exercise of contemporary imperialism:

> The invasion of Iraq was a bandit act, an act of blatant state terrorism, demonstrating absolute contempt for the concept of international law. The invasion was an arbitrary military action inspired by a series of lies upon lies and gross manipulation of the media and therefore of the public; an act intended to consolidate American military and economic control of the Middle East masquerading—as a last resort—all other justifications having failed to justify themselves—as liberation. (26-27)

Pinter's sharp criticism, uttered in such a strategic moment as the Nobel Prize ceremony, created immediate reactions worldwide. Some left-wing authoritative voices (Michael Frayn, David Hare and Tom Stoppard) praised Pinter's speech (Parini, 2005: 15), which consolidated his systematic opposition to oppression:

> Pinter cannot be dismissed as politically worthless: this is a story with many greys. Sometimes his fickle rage has been directed against targets who really deserved it—and Pinter behaved with ramshackle heroism. In 1979, he travelled to

> Nicaragua to back the democratic, socialist Sandinistas against the US-backed fascist guerrillas who were besieging the country. In 1985, he spent five days in Turkey—as international President of Pen—where he met with dissidents, and spoke out against torture and state-backed murder. (Hari, 2005: 35)

However, Pinter was also heavily criticised by others who did not agree with him winning the prize, mainly because of his controversial political support for dictators such as Milosevic. Christopher Hitchens, for instance, reminded the public that Pinter's attacks on Bush and Blair, but not on Saddam, coupled with his justification of the 9/11 attacks in New York, made Pinter's activism "a combination of banality with evil: a preference for dictatorship larded with obscenity and fatuity" (Hitchens, 2005: 18). In any case, what Pinter's lecture did not was leave people impassive, and it did not take much for reactions from the United States to arise: American critics accused the Nobel Foundation of granting the prize to a writer considered as ridiculous, repellent and insane (in Parini, 2005: 15). Moreover, the Bush administration initiated a diplomatic campaign to counteract the image of America overseas, because it had been vastly damaged after Pinter's speech (Allen-Mills, 2005: 3), which ultimately demonstrated that his public attacks did have effective consequences on current politics and proved that the author had been mostly influential in his political activism.

Pinter's tireless political commitment could be seen in his countless public statements, his articles and his literature: Pinter "from start to finish, has been deeply and relentlessly political, looking at the use and abuse of power in various (although always brutal) settings" (Parini, 2005: 15).[54] His sharp and outspoken criticism towards the United States and Britain turned him into an insistent oppositional and counter-power figure that used his outrage to reveal the counter-stories that, in Pinter's view, needed to be known worldwide. Likewise, the fact that his Nobel Prize lecture—calling for truth and international justice and denouncing what Pinter thought to be the silenced crimes of both America and, as its main ally, Britain—was internationally recorded and broadcast, made the writer a benchmark among the dissident British intelligentsia: "Few

[54] Among Pinter's prolific production, I shall mention the House of Commons speeches in 2002 and 2003 in which the author was sharply critical to American imperialism and Britain's indulgency with it, not to mention these nations' hypocrisy when they used words such as "freedom" and "democracy" in vain (Pinter, 2002 and 2003). Additionally, three short poems on the Iraq war should be highlighted: "God Bless America," "Democracy," and "Weather Forecast," all of them exposing the author's antagonism to the war. A gloomy atmosphere of death is present in his language, a gothic air echoes the dark side and the consequences of war.

writers in our time have demonstrated such a passionate concern for victims of oppression, whether in the family's living room or in the torturer's faraway bunker, as Harold Pinter" (15).

4.2.2.1 Fictionalising Iraq

The intellectual resistance to Iraq was not always in the same militant style as that of Pinter. Other writers of the time also contributed to the attack on Blair's decision to join the US in war, but their criticism, although sharply acute and categorical, was not as forceful as Pinter's. This other intellectual opposition was made explicit not only through public statements, lectures and interviews, but it was also evident in these writers' literature, as will be immediately shown.

The writers that dealt with Iraq in their novels were John Le Carré with *Absolute Friends* (2003), Sue Townsend with *Adrian Mole and the Weapons of Mass Destruction* (2004), Ian McEwan with *Saturday* (2005), Alison Miller with *Demo* (2005), Alasdair Gray with his edition of John Tunnock's papers in *Old Men in Love* (2007), and Robert Harris with *The Ghost* (2007). Among the plays that also dealt with the invasion were Alistair Beaton's *Follow My Leader* (2004), and David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (2004).[55] Since it is not possible to analyse all these writers and their novels in this dissertation, I will therefore focus on one canonical writer of the decade, Ian McEwan, and one popular and commercial writer, Robert Harris. The selection of the former writer responds to the interest in following McEwan's political commitment over time, as the author was one of those liberal thinkers who publicly opposed the politics of Margaret Thatcher during the previous decade. By analysing McEwan's political views—which have appeared in interviews and public statements, and also as described in his novel *Saturday*—I will examine whether the writer did in fact function as a counter-hegemonic voice during the Blair years. I will also discuss Robert Harris and his novel

[55] Alistair Beaton also wrote *The Absence of War* (1994), a play that portrays the origins of New Labour. Also, *Feelgood* (2001) was another satire on the New Labour modernising project; it portrayed the detachment of the party from its traditional roots and the apparently grotesque reality of spin and lobbying that characterised contemporary politics. It is a sample of the playwright's disenchantment with the Labour movement, a treachery, in his view, to many Labour voters (Beaton, 2001: 14). Other fiction works by contemporary writers that analysed and/or criticised New Labour during Blair's second term were Simon Walters' *Second Term* (2000), Andy McSmith's *Innocent in the House* (2001), Martin Sixsmith's *Spin* (2004), Lance Price's *Time and Fate* (2005), and David Hare's play *The Permanent Way* (2004).

The Ghost, a bestseller that, although often considered an example of popular literature, constitutes a relevant and compelling counter-power text as far as Blairism is concerned. This is again an attempt to incorporate popular works into the analysis and study of British politics, not only through highly reputed intellectuals, but also through other popular voices such as Harris.

While **Ian McEwan** was not particularly revolutionary during the 1980s, he was one of those who publicly stood for the end of Thatcherism by participating in the intellectual opposition of the time, namely, Charter 88 and 20 June Discussion Group. Later, under the New Labour government, McEwan continued expressing his political views and openly took a stand in crucial political matters of his own country and abroad. Climate change, the 9/11 New York attacks, the London bombings and the now examined Iraq war were some examples shown in a range of his articles: "Beyond Belief" (2001), "Ambivalence on the Brink of War" (2003a), "A Tale of Two Cities" (2005a), "How Could we have Forgotten that this was Always Going to Happen?" (2005b) and "A New Dawn" (2008). Although he has admitted that "I'm not a very political person actually" (McEwan, 2011: 26), he has been especially motivated to reflect the relevance of history in his narrative, and yet, has McEwan been a political writer? Was the author a New Labour admirer, or an opponent? Did McEwan support or oppose the Iraq war?

Generally speaking, McEwan's perception of the New Labour Prime Minister seemed initially supportive. The author publicly admitted that Blair's victory in the general election of 2005, in spite of the war, was the most reasonable thing that could have happened in democratic Britain. Blair had seen his majority diminished, which was, in McEwan's opinion, a fair sanction; yet, the New Labour political triumph was the only realistic result, since the Conservative Party was not even an option:

> Two months ago, he was the villain. The day after he won the election, the press erupted in a furious, spiteful rage. It was incredible. You would think he'd just been found guilty of child murder. He'd been returned with a reduced majority, which I think was actually a perfectly mature, democratic decision. It was about right. There was no other game in town, there was no other party that could actually reasonably take power. The Tories couldn't do it. So to have him back with his power diminished in parliament seemed to me to be a pretty good communal decision—at least if you think of democracies as being like people at a séance, with a Ouija board spelling out letters that nobody can quite predict. *I take a very unfashionable view of Tony Blair. I think he's the least bad prime minister we've had*. (McEwan, 2005c; my emphasis)

McEwan's consideration that Tony Blair was the "least bad prime minister" goes in line with the author's positive regard for Labour, and more concretely for the New Labour Party, as he has confessed that he always preferred to give Labour a chance (McEwan, 2010). Even despite the criticism of academics and experts who quantified a rise in social inequalities under the New Labour era, and that investment in public services was proportionally inferior to the Thatcher decade (McKay and Rowlingson, 2008: 58; Stedward, 2000: 173), the writer was a recognised admirer of what he considered Blair's achievements and reforms. Some of these reforms were, in his view, of essential urgency after Thatcherism—for instance, the New Labour investments in health and education, a well-regarded economic performance, and various labour reforms. In this respect, McEwan wrote of New Labour's successes in prejudice of the Old Labour heritage:

> There have been gross mistakes, but for those who have nostalgia for old Labour, they must reflect on 30 percent inflation, 3 million were unemployed, public service was a total chaos, the government was constantly on its knees to the International Monetary Fund and there was a sense of real decline. Old Labour was a disaster, an absolute disaster. And I've never forgiven the right for their 18 years in power here, either. The fact that we've now got money pouring into education and we're finally beginning to restore the public health service is a real achievement. If you had told someone on the left in 1975 that there would be a Labour-led government with 3 percent inflation, a 2.5 percent growth rate, 800,000 unemployed and a minimum wage, they would think you were in fantasyland. (McEwan, 2005c)

With regards to the Iraq war, McEwan admitted his "ambivalent" position and the difficult moral question of either supporting or opposing the war (2005c), but acknowledged that he had initially supported the invasion in the same way that he had supported the war in Kosovo and Afghanistan. In an article for *The Telegraph* entitled "Strong Cases for and against War: But we Don't Hear them" (2003b), McEwan argued that he had supported Blair's bravery by emphasising that military intervention in Kosovo and Afghanistan was necessary to get rid of evil regimes: "Tony Blair, vilified at the time, played a tough hand in both those campaigns, and he was proved right. Far more would have suffered if nothing had been done" (McEwan, 2003b). In the article, the novelist put forward those arguments he considered important to support or oppose the war in Iraq; yet, it seemed clear that his vision was critical to peace movements, as he considered the war a real option to beat Saddam Hussein: "The peace movement

needs to come up with concrete proposals for containing him if he is not to be forcefully disarmed. He has obsessively produced chemical and biological weapons on an industrial scale, and has a history of bloody territorial ambition. What to do?" (2003b). He went on, saying: "The peace movement does not have a monopoly of the humanitarian arguments" (2003b). Even then McEwan insisted on his ambivalence towards the war:

> To choose war is to choose unknown terrifying futures. Containment by perpetual inspection might be the duller, safer option. Still, the hawks have my head, the doves my heart. At a push I count myself—just—in the camp of the latter. And yet my ambivalence remains. I defend it by reference to the fact that nothing any of us say will make any difference: ambivalence is no less effective than passionate conviction. (2003b)

By the end of Blair's premiership, McEwan again wondered about the consequences of the war. Although he maintained his ambivalence, he admitted that "the occupation has been a disaster from the very first day, and I speak as one who really wanted it once it had started—really wanted it to succeed" (McEwan, 2007b). In another interview, McEwan declared that the main factor that delegitimised the war was, first and foremost, the way Bush and Blair planned the war, and secondly, the absence of a postwar reconstruction project (McEwan, 2005c). Despite McEwan's initial support for the war, he eventually questioned the circumstances in which it took place, and reflected upon the moral rationale of war: "It's always an interesting issue, how do you defeat a vile opponent without becoming a little bit vile yourself?" (McEwan, 2007a: 40). For McEwan, leading the war made "doing evil" inevitable: "It's very hard to remain good and to enter battle" (40). To a certain extent, it seemed that the novelist was fully aware of the pros and cons of the conflict, and tried to sympathise with the Iraqi people by acknowledging that an intervention would be unavoidable, sooner or later, for humanitarian reasons. McEwan equally recognised that the circumstances in which Blair and Bush decreed to go to war were not ideal, and the consequences of the conflict were disastrous. However, it is interesting to note a residual sympathy towards Blair's government, as the author seemed to suggest that once the British government decided to join the US in the war, the Prime Minister would be immediately demonised. This is perhaps McEwan's supposition that, despite Blair's good intentions, the war mined his reputation and damaged his legacy.

McEwan's confessed ambivalence towards the war was also present in his novel *Saturday* (2005), which is contextualised in relation to the most controversial decisions of Blair's premiership—namely, the Iraq war and the subsequent massive protest march that took place in London on 15 February 2003. With this historical context in the background, the author develops the moral dilemma of his protagonist, Henry Perowne, as to whether the war should be supported or opposed, asking the questions: is there such a thing as a moral war? Should governments have a moral rationale for making war? Do Western nations have the moral duty to overthrow evil dictatorial regimes? This internal conflict leads the character to interpret the Iraq war as a legitimate moral intervention, to then question the effectiveness of the massive popular opposition, the role of the Prime Minister, and the moral function of countries such as Britain when they try to fight the violation of human rights (McEwan, 2006: 69-73). In this sense, Perowne's support of the war contrasts with his daughter Daisy's views, and with her opposition to the conflict. Daisy is passionate about the present events and the massive demonstration that is taking place in the streets of London against what she considers to be Britain's major mistake, the unilateral military intervention, the end of the UN, the slaughter and the refugees, the supposed oil interests of America in Iraq and America's lack of concern about establishing democracy after the war (186).

The decision to invade Iraq provoked an international crisis that divided Western countries, the UN, and worldwide citizens. The pros and cons of the war not only forced world leaders to make their political interests clear, but they also triggered an exercise of moral conscience: should Saddam Hussein be deposed? This dilemma is reflected in McEwan's novel through Perowne and his daughter's views on the war, which embody the moral dilemma of intervention in dictatorial regimes that violate human rights. Perowne's support for the war is based on the belief that a short war might cause fewer casualties than those produced by Saddam's tortures and ethnic cleansing: "The Prime Minister is expected to emphasise in a speech in Glasgow today the humanitarian reasons for war. In Perowne's view, the only case worth making" (69). He then went on, saying: "It could be a disaster. But it could be the end of a disaster and the beginning of something better" (187). In this way, McEwan uses his characters to present the pros and cons of the war and portrays Perowne's own ambiguous vision over the war, thus granting some good faith in the Prime Minister's intentions: "Simply, the Prime Minister might be sincere and wrong. Some of his bitterest opponents don't doubt his good faith. He could be on the verge of a monstrous miscalculation" (141). In this

dilemma, "Perowne has had ambivalent or confused and shifting ideas about this coming invasion" (62), the very same ambivalent and confused feelings McEwan has confessed he had over the war (McEwan, 2007a: 40).[56]

Therefore, given Perowne's ambivalence towards the war as exposed in the novel, could *Saturday* be considered a counter-hegemonic text? Could McEwan be considered, by extension, a counter-hegemonic writer? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to go back to Lawrence Driscoll's analysis of contemporary middle-class writers—Ian McEwan, Kazuo Ishiguro, Martin Amis, Hanif Kureishi, Graham Swift, Jonathan Coe, etc.—as exposed in his book *Evading Class in Contemporary British Literature* (2009). In this study, Driscoll holds that many contemporary writers, despite their diverse attempts to show themselves as liberal left-wing intellectuals, are instead canonical middle-class writers who unconsciously reproduce and reinforce a bourgeois ideology in their narratives. As I state in the introduction to this chapter, it could be inappropriate to generalise by stating that because the majority of the contemporary fiction writers are middle-class, they are intrinsically detached from subversive forms of political writing. However, on this occasion, I very much agree with professor Driscoll when he maintains that McEwan's novel exposes class tensions that clearly favour its middle-class protagonists (i.e. the working-class "yob," Baxter, versus the well-off neurosurgeon Perowne), suggesting that McEwan unconsciously reproduces dominant class views (Driscoll, 2009: 29). As such, McEwan's political psyche is made evident through *Saturday*'s plot and his characterisation of both Perowne and Baxter: the story revolves around Perowne's middle-class lifestyle, family, values and harmony and the reader can only see through Perowne's eyes, whereas the working-class Baxter remains "almost wholly unknown" (50). Although McEwan makes an attempt to evoke sympathy towards Baxter in this novel—and towards the working class in his other novels—it seems, according to Driscoll, that McEwan's narratives actually fail to do that, and instead, "reinforce[s] rather than deconstruct[s] a dominant world-view" (38). But how could it be interpreted that McEwan eventually favours Perowne's middle-

[56] McEwan has confessed, in different interviews, that his characters were a personification of his own thoughts and they shared his own personal ambivalence towards the war. The conflict that existed between Henry and his daughter Daisy's views on the war was meant to symbolise McEwan's inner conflict about the invasion: "She represents one bit of me and Henry represents some other bit. It was like two voices in my head" (in Deveney, 2005). There have been some critics who interpreted Perowne's support for the war as McEwan's political position (Winterhalter, 2010: 340; Ross, 2008: 91), whereas others argued that there is no factual evidence that McEwan exactly thinks like his character (Wallace, 2007: 466).

class position? Driscoll suggests that Baxter's "invasion" of Perowne's house does not really change Perowne's family lifestyle, nor imposes irreversible changes in their lives (Baxter does not rape Daisy, and no member of the family is hurt). However, working-class Baxter falls on the stairs, hits his head and his disease has no cure, which shows that McEwan eventually dislodges and expels "the working class character, allowing the self-generated bourgeois male to carry on as before, challenged but finally stronger, and with his class dominance firmly reestablished" (47). Driscoll concludes that McEwan's work "reveals the bourgeois ideology of our own moment" (38).

From Driscoll's study, I conclude that there are parallelisms between the critic's class-based analysis and the interpretation of Perowne's political views on the war. As Driscoll stated, despite McEwan's attempts to sympathise with working-class Baxter, the writer actually fails to do so and instead reinforces middle-class views. In the same way, I believe that behind Perowne's ambivalence towards the war, and despite his attempts to appear as understanding with the anti-war protesters as he is with those who opposed Blair's war in Iraq, the writer eventually fails to do that. Instead, his writing reinforces dominant worldviews and hegemonic ambitions of exporting Western democracy and freedom to the "poor" Muslim countries. McEwan's sympathy with the march protesters or with Daisy's political views might prove ineffective, because the whole plot revolves around Perowne's personal space (his house, his car, his experiences, his moral conscience) and the real anti-war demonstration is *almost wholly unknown*. Whereas most of the novel's descriptions focus on Perowne's lifestyle, there are exceptional and marginal descriptions of the demonstration: interestingly, Perowne's route to his squash match is diverted because of the demonstration, so he never actually faces or confronts street protesters; he also switches off the television when news about the demonstration and the war comes on. Moreover, the few descriptions of anti-war marchers in the novel actually convey prejudiced stereotypes from a middle-class neurosurgeon: the protesters have "hung their banners from the window, along with football scarves and the names of towns from the heart of England—Stratford, Gloucester, Evesham" (McEwan, 2006: 71). They are depicted as working-class football fans from central England, who make noise and are cheap consumers of McDonald's products: "At the far end of the street, cartons and paper cups are spreading thickly under the feet of demonstrators gathered outside McDonald's on the corner" (74). Perowne's antipathy and aversion towards the poor working class, or the ignorant anti-war demonstrators, is evident when he judges their festive spirits,

asking: should not they be worried about the victims of the war? Why do they look so cheerful and pleased?

> All this happiness on display is suspect. Everyone is thrilled to be together out on the streets—people are hugging themselves, it seems, as well as each other. If they think—and they could be right—that continued torture and summary executions, ethnic cleansing and occasional genocide are preferable to an invasion, they should be sombre in their view. (69-70)

In my view, and in tune with Driscoll's argument, Perowne's prejudiced views on the crowd—and on the ignorant masses that are too emotional and unaware of the real consequences of non-intervention—show that the writer's attempts to sympathise with them fail.[57] Similarly, Perowne's ambivalence towards the war could just be another failing attempt to enter the mind of those who oppose the war, while reinforcing dominant worldviews on the urgent moral duty to invade Iraq by Western nations. In the same way that Baxter is illuminated by Matthew Arnold's poem in order to be humanised and cease his evil intentions, the Muslim world also needs to be illuminated by Western freedom and democracy in order to humanise their lifestyle. Driscoll states that "Arnold's 'Dover Beach' comes to the rescue, and saves the bourgeois family," suggesting that high-brow culture can liberate and educate the working class, control its evil instincts and protect and reproduce the family's middle-class stability (Driscoll, 2009: 51). In this respect, Driscoll points out: "Literature is effectively used as a tool of control, not as a tool of liberation" (51). Likewise, the Iraq war is also used as a tool of control and not as a tool of liberation: Perowne's defence of the idea of a moral war that liberates the oppressed Muslim people actually reinforces the idea of war as a tool to control, educate and illuminate the "uncivilised poor" Iraqi people.

Could we consequently conclude that McEwan's *Saturday* is a counter-hegemonic text? Could we also conclude that Perowne's ambivalence towards the war is an example of the intellectual dissidence to power? I believe the novel does not respond to categorical subversive criteria, and instead, reproduces and reinforces hegemonic discourses that have conceptualised war through the Western notions of morality and justice. Whilst McEwan argues that his counter-power position stands for his opposition

[57] Perowne actually tries to understand his daughter's opposition to the war, but Daisy is not a street protester, but a well-off liberal artist who is going to have dinner with her wealthy family while the "ignorant" crowd is in the demonstration.

to Saddam Hussein's regime and abuse of authority—including torture and ethnic cleansing—the author seems to be organically detached from the reasons why anti-war protesters actually opposed the war. Namely, it was not because they defended Saddam's crimes, but because they saw in the Iraq war an example of how hegemonic nations such as Britain and the United States exerted power by making undemocratic and unilateral decisions, and imposed their concept of civilisation by perverting the notions of freedom and democracy.

Those like Henry Perowne, who defended universal human rights, had the moral duty to support Britain and the US plan in Iraq in the name of justice. However, it is precisely the understanding of moral responsibility that puts not only Western nations, but also war supporters such as Perowne, in a position of superiority—a moral, cultural superiority, a superiority of consciousness—that reveals relations of power among different nations and cultures, and establishes a class system among the civilised and the uncivilised. Slavoj Žižek emphasised, in his book *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (2004), that there was, in fact, a need to face dictatorial regimes: "Abstract pacifism is intellectually stupid and morally wrong—one must stand firm against a threat" (Žižek, 2004: 50). And yet, Žižek denounced that the Iraq war was essentially wrong, because of the superiority and hypocrisy of the US when proclaiming itself as the liberator of the oppression:

> Of course the fall of Saddam is a relief to a large majority of the Iraqi people. Even more, of course, militant Islam is a horrifying reactionary ideology. Of course there is something hypocritical in all the reasons put forward against the war: the revolt should come from the Iraqi people themselves; we should not impose our values on them; war is never the answer, and so on. *But*, although all this is true, the attack was wrong—and it was *who did it* that made it wrong. The question should be: *who are you to do this?*" (50)

Who is America or Britain to lead a unilateral invasion? Who is America or Britain to call for human rights to justify the Iraq war? Žižek denounced the contradictions and hypocrisy of "dirty" democracies (the US and Britain's) because their good faith and their good intentions were far from being moral and legitimate (22). Their illegal human rights pledge only seemed a suitable and moral argument used to convince citizens, nations and some intellectuals to support a war planned long before.

McEwan's ambivalence towards the war, in his pursuit to understand different viewpoints, may attempt to approach international politics from a reflective and even

humane position—by defending certain moral values and by apparently empathising with others. However, does the writer's ambivalence, and his occasional support for the war, put him on the margins of Blair's power? Or, on the contrary, does the author justify Blair's hegemonic discourse when understanding the role of Britain, or the West, in liberating and illuminating the other in the name of human rights? The author's nuanced critical views on Blair's government, his predominantly non-categorical position, and his "vanilla-flavoured politics" (Tayler, 2010: 6) do not shape the writer as a counter-hegemonic voice during Blair's premiership. Despite McEwan's constant devotion to represent history and contemporaneity in his narrative, and his frequent political statements addressed to the British government, the writer's reactions against the politics of Tony Blair were not strictly oppositional. Some critics have praised McEwan for being a committed British writer:

> What we are witnessing here is the emergence of McEwan as the closest thing this country has to a national novelist. He is the literary novelist-as-bestseller: the writer who, because of his continuous, imaginative engagement with the shifting complexities of the present, brings news and can speak to and for the nation at times of crisis and shock. (Cowley, 2005: 20)

But others have pointed out that McEwan is no longer revolutionary but mainstream: "He is no longer the writer of choice for disaffected young intellectuals and some argue that with popular success has come blandness: just like Johnny Rotten appearing on television to advertise butter, the former enfant terrible has sold out" (Kerridge, 2010: 20). His sympathetic moral position towards the war might be the most humane among contemporary writers, but when analysing his function as a counter-hegemonic intellectual during Blair's premiership, McEwan does not seem to be an influential challenger of the New Labour government, and instead, he seems to be more supportive of it. From this perspective, the author does not help to deconstruct the dominant and hegemonic political schemes, but justifies them by legitimising the exercise of Western power in the name of civilisation and democracy. McEwan's ambivalence, his moral dilemma, and his attempts to sympathise with different political points of view go more in line with the figure of the intellectual as the humanist—the one that tries to understand history and reality in its human condition—but perhaps McEwan's ambivalence and his lack of a categorical commitment for or against the war

distances the writer from the function of the "intellectual" as is understood in this dissertation: a challenger of the status quo and a defender of a specific political cause.

According to the theoretical schemes that structure this study—Gramsci, for instance—the real intellectual had to be a leader committed to a political cause and had to aspire to change the political reality as a "permanent persuader and not just [as] a simple orator" (Gramsci, 1971: 10). McEwan's political discourse goes more in line with a moral rhetoric of universal values than with the explicit function of exerting a nonconformist and counter-hegemonic leading role in society. According to Gramsci's theory, the counter-hegemonic intellectual had the social and political function of reacting against power, overthrowing its hegemony and defending the rights of the oppressed. From this perspective, McEwan's position against Saddam's power actually resembles Gramsci's claim of the figure of the intellectual committed to achieving a social change; that is, the intellectual is required to be the voice in charge of challenging the established hegemony—in this case, Saddam's hegemony. However, while this is true, it is also necessary to understand that the function of the intellectual is, now according to Foucault, to oppose power in every instance in which power takes place, and independent from any regime of thought or ideology that can be transformed into power. In other words, the intellectual needs to be independent from power discourses that might reproduce dominant worldviews. McEwan's ambivalence towards the Iraq war, masked behind a halo of ideological independence or apparent neutrality, reproduces and reinforces what Foucault called the "erudite" or the "established" knowledge (Foucault, 1980: 133) which could be understood in this analysis as the one that suggests that Western nations have the moral duty to liberate and illuminate "uncivilised" countries. The novelist, in his attempt to understand those who opposed the war, recalls that Blair and Bush did lie about the war, and that the way they actually organised the invasion was not ideal; yet, the writer seems to neglect the fact that beyond Blair's lies about the war existed a subjugated knowledge that dominant nations such as Britain and the US denied: that the war itself, beyond political lying, was an act of power that tried to impose control over other nations by hypocritically using the concepts of freedom and democracy.

The Iraq war and the preceding political lying, that allegedly endeavoured to manipulate public opinion in order to achieve a consented invasion, was also the source of generalised criticism. This manipulation materialised in the publication of the controversial war dossier apparently edited by the British government to legitimise the

war, which then turned into a scandal very attractive for writers to exploit in fiction. As already explained, Blair's anxiety for obtaining popular support for his crusade against Saddam Hussein led him to take great pains in elaborating a dossier with his rationale to justify the war by warning against the threat of Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) developed an initial draft of the dossier, but the government, with Alastair Campbell and other aids such as David Manning and Jonathan Powell in the lead, insisted that some modifications were necessary in order to show the authentic threat they thought Saddam represented (Seldon, 2005: 582). A modified version of the original dossier was finally published as evidence of Iraq's menace; yet in May 2003, a BBC journalist, Andrew Gilligan, accused the government of misbehaviour, for the journalist had reliable information that ensured there were no Weapons of Mass Destruction. The government eventually leaked the source of Gilligan's allegations and pointed at David Kelly, a Ministry of Defence intelligence expert who committed suicide under mysterious circumstances. The Hutton Enquiry carried out the whole investigation, and in 2004 concluded that the government was found not guilty of misconduct, even though the Blair government was still suspect of conspiracy and was popularly considered responsible for Kelly's death. The story of a British government involved in a plot of political lying—to justify the war—and Kelly's subsequent suspicious suicide made the intrigue the perfect outline for a thriller novel: that was Robert Harris's *The Ghost* (2007), and the later inspired film version *The Ghost Writer* by Roman Polanski (2010) which will be analysed in chapter six of this dissertation.

Having been a well-known political journalist and commentator for *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times*, **Robert Harris** declared his support for Blair back in 1997 when he became a Labour donor. The novelist eventually withdrew his support for the Prime Minister as soon as he observed Blair's evolution in power, his presidentialist style, his undemocratic decisions, and last but not least, the Iraq debacle. As he himself stated, the Iraq war had diminished his devotion for the leader and his party: "We had our ups and downs, but we didn't really fall out until the invasion of Iraq, which made no sense to me" (Harris in *NPR Books*, 2011). In the beginning, Harris was a fervent supporter of the New Labour project and he personally liked Blair; but the Iraq war—which was considered meaningless by the author—and the presidentialist halo that shrouded the Prime Minister by the end of his premiership finally disappointed the novelist. As he declared in an interview:

> I liked Blair very much. The thing about him was he was frank, even ordinary. Like a member of the human race. When I looked at him during Chilcot, I thought: "My god, where has that man gone?" He has been replaced by this globetrotting, taut-faced, worked-out, neo-con, almost robotic creature that lives behind a security screen. […] It's all profoundly undemocratic. As we shuffle through airport security with our shoes in our hands, the guys that got us in this state are waltzing through a different part of the airport. It's the new aristocracy. (Harris in Gilbey, 2010: 28)

Harris's disenchantment with Blair derived from the politician's transformation into an elitist and undemocratic leader that seemed to have abandoned his early "call-me-Tony" style and his image of the people's Prime Minister, which clashed with the millionaire-touring lecturer he became after his exit from government in 2007. Moreover, Harris added that part of his final regret with the Labour Party, even though he had backed its modernisation programme in the beginning, was precisely its "non-ideological" approach, and its detachment from former political convictions that, at least for Harris, made politics more engaging and more dynamic:

> I was pro the modernising of the Labour party, so I was an early supporter of the idea of New Labour. In a way I'm almost more rueful about the notion of having a non-ideological Labour party than I am about the personality of Tony Blair. I used to love politics. I can't say I do any more. All the fun has gone out of it. Each side is engaged in this trench warfare of managerialism. They're all too scared to say anything that might make them appear something other than completely bland. (28)

Harris was one of those writers who thought that the Blair era had eventually signified an erosion of twentieth-century political ideologies at the turn of the twenty-first century. For the novelist, contemporary politics seemed to have faded into a relative political correctness that generated a symbiosis of the two main parties, thus abandoning sharper ideological identities and assimilating a more pragmatic *realpolitik*, all of which illustrated the achromatic dichotomy of present-day political parties that turned democracy and politics into a boring scenario. Harris's disappointment with contemporary politics, and his disposition to analyse the meanings and mechanisms of power spurred him to reflect on the nature of power, and how power is many times achieved through wrongdoing and corruption: "He likes to explore the topic of democracy, and politics, which shows the very undemocratic society we live in nowadays" (Patterson, 2009: 8). As Philip Sinden also stated: "Harris is always

interested in politics and democracy, and to analyse whether contemporary democracy is effective: people today don't live in a functioning democracy" (2009: 26). Concretely, the manipulation of truth by the government, ultimately utilised to remain in power, will be one of the main critical fronts that Harris's novel, *The Ghost*, mirrors of the Blair years, and this will be the issue here analysed.

Harris's illustration of contemporary politics reinforces the idea that Britain is far from being a real democratic country. *The Ghost* exposes the backstage of the mechanisms of politics in order to shed light on veiled forms of power and thus show that, despite the apparent image of transparency and accountability, power is essentially corrupted by personal ambitions, the intertwined interests of some few, and obscure intentions that the common citizen could not even imagine. With this vision of contemporary British politics, Harris's novel is an attempt to denounce and satirically illustrate that governmental decisions, although sometimes illogical to the common eye, serve to guarantee the existence and survival of those in power. *The Ghost* is therefore a commercial thriller that provides an explanation for Blair's engagement in the *war on terror* by developing a thorough conspiracy of a British Prime Minister named Adam Lang, who is promoted by the CIA in exchange for unconditional support for the US in the Iraq war and other international affairs. That may have been the reason why *a man without politics and without ideology* reached Downing Street: "Name me one decision that Adam Lang took as prime minister that wasn't in the interests of the United States of America" (Harris, 2008: 322). The novel depicts the intricate but exciting adventure of a ghostwriter who is hired to write Lang's memoirs and who unexpectedly ends up investigating both Britain's "special relationship" with the US, and the mysterious dead of Michael McAra, Lang's former ghostwriter who was found dead under strange circumstances precisely when he was suspected of holding too much sensitive information about the Prime Minister's real story. The "ghost" will discover that a secret conspiracy between the American intelligence services and the British executive may have resulted in the suspicious suicide of McAra: "This must've been some operation. Too big for a newspaper. This must've been a *government*" (45). The connection with David Kelly's suicide and the composition of the controversial war dossier in the Blair government is unmistakable within the novel. It is the perfect fictional explanation for the death, by suicide or other mysterious circumstances, of those who knew about the governments' criminal actions. The novel thus creates a fictional reality for how political memoirs are aimed to omit, embellish and edit real

biographies to ultimately make them a marketable product. This superposition of fabricated stories that eventually mask reality—the ghostwriter has to edit McAra's fake memoirs of Lang's real life—induces to interpret that, as fiction is written by transforming reality into something else (something attached to certain marketable, economic or political interests), history is also written by transforming reality into something convenient to those in power or the interests of those in power. Harris's metanarrative effect consequently reveals the manipulation of the mechanisms of writing fiction/memoirs in order to denounce that the established version of history, or the hegemonic political discourses, might be, in fact, a constructed deceit: "This practice implies an understanding of how history is constantly being made and remade by condoning self-serving fabrications and eschewing issues of truth, so that 'a private fantasy about our lives' may become 'accepted as fact'" (De Michelis, 2012: 78). That is, Lang and his allies' efforts to control the mechanisms of writing the memoirs—by forbidding the ghostwriter to copy McAra's file, by killing McAra, and persistently hounding the ghostwriter—parallel the efforts of the Blair government to control the mechanisms of historical writing. As the dossier that contained the rationale for the Iraq invasion was not comprehensive enough, it was necessary to omit, embellish and edit the information in order to transform it into a marketable product, and thus manipulate the public opinion and achieve the support needed to carry out the government's plans. In that sense, the novel resembles the dossier conspiracy, for "*The Ghost* persuasively foregrounds the way in which control over secrets and/or revelations is the paradigmatic site of a never-ending struggle for power" (79).

In both the novel and real life politics, there seems to exist a manipulation of truth—through writing and editing information—in order to guarantee the hegemony of those in power. In the novel, Lang's fabricated memoirs were to disguise the true story of a Prime Minister who seemed to have reached power thanks to the American influence in exchange for unconditional support in the Iraq war. That American influence, and the position of the British government—as well as that of the Prime Minister—seem to be safeguarded by killing McAra, by persecuting the ghostwriter and by controlling the manuscript (and the mechanisms of writing the manuscript). The official discourses, uttered by those in power, end up being fabrications of truth to justify certain political interests, to ultimately remain in power and extend their influence and their hegemony. The Blair government equally manipulated the truth in Iraq, modified the war dossier, and was also suspicious of David Kelly's death, all with

the aim to control the official discourse (and the writing mechanisms) and ultimately justify its political interests, remain in power and extend its hegemony. As Ray Cassin pointed out: the novel is "an elegant skewering of Blairism and its corrosive, corrupting manipulation of public discourse" (2007: 23).

Therefore, the parallelism that exists between Harris's *The Ghost* and the government's conspiracy regarding the war dossier and Kelly's death could also be proved through Foucault's theory of *Power/Knowledge* when the theorist affirms that power depends on knowledge, and knowledge depends on power in order to exist (Foucault, 1980: 51-52). This means that, according to Foucault, any "regime of thought"—or any official truth—is generated and established as such by institutions with particular political or economic interests (131). Power institutionalises a particular truth that is in the interest of certain groups, and in order to obtain and maintain that power, the elite needs to achieve the control of the means of distribution of truth, showing that truth is "produced and maintained in circulation in societies through the work of a number of different institutions and practices" (Mills, 2003: 79). This could be implied in both *The Ghost*, and the scandal of the war dossier during Blair's mandate. As governments guarantee the survival of a particular truth, other accounts of truth, like the "subjugated" or disqualified knowledge will be "located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of recognition or scientificity" (Foucault, 1980: 82), ensuring the annihilation of anyone or any proof that might reveal the governments' intentions to preserve their power.

All in all, the novel represents another referential example of the rage that Blair's politics incited, as well as the opposition that the Iraq war provoked in both British society and many intellectuals who denounced war crimes, political lying and corruption. Harris's disenchantment with Blair's politics thus denotes the author's political dissent in the novel, as based on his feeling that governments betray and use their countries to their own benefit:

> There was a time […] when princes taking their countries to war were supposed to risk their lives in battle—you know, lead by example. Now they travel around in bomb-proof cars with armed bodyguards and make fortunes three thousand miles away, while the rest of us are stuck in the consequences of their actions. (Harris, 2008: 16)

The Ghost represents Harris's denunciation of Blair's corrupt power and the government's secret and Machiavellian manipulation of truth in order to achieve certain planned objectives, such as to manipulate people's views in order to get their support and legitimise the Iraq war. In that way, Harris's novel embodies an uncomfortable public exposition and critical judgment of Blair's supposed illegal affairs in government, specifically the accusations against Iraq—many times assumed to be an "illegal" war that ignored UN resolutions and broke international law. The novel has thus been said to portray "a sort of disillusion and a sort of anger that Britain went along with something which seemed so, even at the time, to be a bridge too far and rather illogical" (Harris in *NPR Books*, 2011). Consequently, Harris's novel is a demonstration of his own disillusion and anger against the government: the novel "owes its existence, its composition […] to Harris's anger at Blair and his administration" (Greenland, 2007: 16). As other critic remarked, Harris was the kind of "New Labour supporter for whom it has all gone sour" (Naughtie, 2007: 55).

The Ghost is therefore considered a key literary sample of the extant criticism of the Blair premiership, a showpiece of the intellectual insurgence against Blair's actions, and one of the most embarrassing illustrations of the construction and maintenance of power. Even though the author himself denied the novel to be a "deep wounding attack on Blair," and classified the novel as a "satirical comment on our times" (Harris in Calhoun), I would dare to remove euphemisms to label the novel a straightforward condemnation of the way politics works and, more concretely, of Britain's foreign policy under New Labour. In its attempt to shatter the government's official discourse and the marketable and attractive image that power needs to project, Harris's narrative reveals a whole unknown world of corruption, manipulation and political lying.

Additionally, whereas *The Ghost* is one of the most important fiction works of the decade in terms of its criticism of the Prime Minister, it is essential to analyse in the present framework whether Robert Harris is, in fact, an exemplary subversive intellectual. Despite the author's disenchantment with Blair's politics, he maintained his special relationship with Labour's elite, namely his good friend Peter Mandelson, and kept his personal contacts within the political establishment. In the face of Harris's negative perception of Blair's government and his evident dissident opinions, it is sometimes hard to consider him an absolute "counter-power" figure within the British intelligentsia at the turn of the twenty-first century. On the one hand, his popular fiction and his widely expressed political opinions have made of him an unequivocal figure of

opposition to Tony Blair's power. On the other hand, his position as a millionaire fiction writer, and his personal contacts with the political elite—he was a well-known donor of the Labour Party and was acknowledged for his contacts in the government, especially in the beginnings of the New Labour movement—make him a curious character and a disconcerting figure: a wealthy man and a Labour supporter? He ironically acknowledged that he removed his political fidelity for Labour because it was detached from people's reality (Harris in Gilbey, 2010: 28), which is interesting if it comes from someone whose reality is closer to the power elite than to the masses themselves. As Christina Patterson advocates in her report on Harris: "Doesn't this closeness to the ruling classes compromise his ability to offer an objective view?" (2009: 8). The whole picture is contradictory as it shows the complexity of the modern cultural and political reality. As has been argued in this dissertation, cultural phenomena cannot be judged by old standards, and past distinctions between high and popular culture seem to have faded in order to give room to new hybrid forms of behaviour and cultural representation. Robert Harris, a well-off popular fiction author, eventually sets the example of how political criticism can be most effectively exerted through commercial fiction by mainstream and wealthy writers.

To conclude this section, it is necessary to emphasise that Blair's second term (2001—2005) was mainly characterised by a growing generalised disenchantment among liberal intellectuals. Writers such as Sue Townsend and Jonathan Coe would highlight, in their respective novels, that Blair's promises to improve public services provoked a widespread disillusion among left-wing voters. Despite investment in health and education, they observed a growing rise in privatisations (with Public Private Partnerships now substituting former public spending), the erosion of public services (NHS, public transport, pensions), and Blair's commitment to the business class, all of which proved an abandonment of the classical Labour ideology and the consecration of Thatcher's legacy in domestic affairs. Yet, the Iraq war would be the event that most enraged public opinion in general, and many writers of the time in particular responded back to the government either through organised manifestos and signature petitions—such as the online platform *openDemocracy*—or through individual critical statements, interviews, journalistic columns, and fiction works (mainly novels). Among the diversity of critical texts and declarations, one of them was particularly relevant: Harold Pinter's Nobel Prize Lecture was, from my point of view, one of the most influential actions against Blair's politics, and I would dare to say one of the sharpest and most

intense samples of radical and passionate opposition to Blair's premiership. Other writers, however, would not reach Pinter's degree of political commitment and rage against the Prime Minister. Robert Harris's forceful novel will function as one of the most direct attacks to Blair's construction of power, but the author's function as a systematic and independent counter-power figure could be questioned. Also, as has been detailed in this section, Ian McEwan, for instance, despite his humane approach to the moral implications of this polemical war, did not represent a categorical opposition to the government, and instead, he was on many occasions supportive of it. All together, Blair's second term would settle the grounds for posterior criticism. It would be his new style of governance in social services and the fiasco of the Iraq war that would prevail even after his departure from government in 2007. Precisely during Blair's last years in office, the intellectual disenchantment became more susceptible and explicit, and some of the voices that had previously been sceptical with the Blair reforms, suddenly turned against the government with strong contempt.

4.3 DISENCHANTMENT (2005—2010)

By 2005 Britain had gone through significant political and social changes that were unthinkable back in 1997 when Tony Blair entered Number 10. After two consecutive terms of Blair in office, the perception of the Labour Party and the young and attractive Prime Minister had been deteriorated. In general terms, the people's support for the government had weakened, and at the doors of the third general election opinion polls suggested that Blair's popularity had decreased. Similarly, the intellectuals' insight into the political picture did not seem to improve, and tiredness, disillusionment and hopelessness shaped the opposition of British intellectuals during Blair's third and last term. The Iraq war had eminently diminished Blair's credibility, and the consequent London bombings in 2005 revealed racial and religious conflicts that put into question Blair's multicultural model and his immigration policies (Navarro, forthcoming).[58]

[58] British immigration policies experienced a radical change from 1997 to 2007 when Blair left the government. Whereas Blair proclaimed the need of a multicultural and tolerant Britain especially at the beginning of his first term, 9/11 and the later London bombings in 2005 generated the introduction of reforms in the immigration system, increasing bureaucratic obstacles for obtaining British citizenship (i.e. citizenship test), motivating immigrants to assimilate certain British values, and reducing the entrance of

Additionally, internal conflicts between Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and their respective allies—publicly exposed and constantly analysed by the media—damaged the political stability and the image of the government, causing a broadly perceived sensation that Blair's departure was approaching.

During New Labour's third term, intellectuals still criticised Blair's last reforms. One of the most debated issues during these years was Blair's turned conservatism when dealing with racial, religious and integration conflicts. Different reputed voices denounced what they considered the injustices of the Blairite legislation, the treatment and situation of immigrants—more specifically the British Muslims—and the uneasy process of integration after the 7/7 London bombings in 2005. Concretely, Hanif Kureishi and Salman Rushdie were two significant voices that publicly opposed Blair's particular concept of multiculturalism and also the raising religious (Muslim) fanatism that had begun to grow in the beginning of the twenty-first century.

4.3.1 Reactions to Blair's Approach to Racial Issues during his Third Term

Hanif Kureishi's collection of essays *The Word and the Bomb* (2005) represented a very comprehensive analysis of the British Muslim identity and the conflicts that existed between the Western-oriented and the Islamic communities in Britain. Kureishi was particularly critical of both the Iraq war and Blair's integration laws because, according to the author, they had promoted racial conflicts and had increased segregation and exclusion in contemporary Britain. His disenchantment with New Labour was evident in his essay "The Word and the Bomb" in which he asserts: "After everything immigrants and their families have contributed to this country, the years of work and the racism faced, the war in Iraq, which Blair thought he could prosecute without cost or social division here, has brought more fragmentation" (Kureishi, 2005b: 9). In this respect, Kureishi blamed the Prime Minister for encouraging racial and religious loyalties, either for or against the war, thus fragmenting British society. For the author, the war in Iraq only served to ruin the previously consolidated efforts to improve multiculturalism, and instead, increased internal divisions and inspired religious loyalties and extremism. Kureishi's categorical opposition to the war was also

asylum seekers. All together put into question the effectiveness of Blair's multiculturalism and his integration policies (Navarro, forthcoming).

present in another of his essays, "The Arduous Conversation will Continue" (2005a), in which he questioned the morality of this "illegal and depressing war" (92) by emphasising the need of the intellectuals to openly react against it with their writings and their literature:

> "Virtual" wars are conflicts in which one can kill others without either witnessing their deaths or having to take moral responsibility for them. The Iraq war, we were told, would be quick and few people would die. […]
>
> Governments may be representative but they and the people are not the same. In our disillusionment, it is crucial that we remind ourselves of this. States behave in ways that would shame an individual. Governments persuade individuals to behave in ways that individuals know are morally wrong. Therefore governments do not speak for us; we have our own voices, however muffled they may seem. […] That is why we have literature, the theatre, newspapers—a culture, in other words. (91-92)

The halo of disenchantment as expressed by Kureishi in his essays also characterised other writers' statements, writers that similarly confessed the feeling of disillusion with the Prime Minister's performance throughout these years. Blair's politics and approach to racial issues had damaged, this time according to Sue Townsend, the historical democratic reputation of Britain: "We had a reputation in the world for the moderation of our political system, the fairness of our judiciary, and, whether entitled to or not, we marched up the hill and built a fortress on the moral high ground. That lies in ruins now" (Townsend, 2010). In this direction, Nigerian British novelist Peter Akinti described how Britain under Blair had become whiter than black; even despite the government's initial efforts to project a modern multi-coloured country and to work on integration, the author observed a U-turn in immigration policies throughout Blair's ten years in office. Whereas in the beginning the government rhetoric focused on improving the image of a multicultural twenty-first century Britain based on London's diversity, after 9/11—and more concretely after the 7/7 London attacks—many voices denounced the closing of British borders, the complexity of the asylum seeker application system, and the new immigration measures that suddenly turned multiculturalism into national assimilation (Navarro, forthcoming). Akinti was one of those voices that, disenchanted with the government, denounced this new social reality: "The task of governing required New Labour to make concessions. Abandoning black people was just one of them. New Labour took my vote for granted, turned its

back on me and sidestepped an important responsibility" (Akinti, 2010). Akinti moved to New York, where he taught Caribbean literature at Hunter College: "I know now, there was nothing wrong with me. There is something wrong with Britain" (2010).

4.3.2. Late Disenchantment: Blair's Prospective Legacy

As the Blair era was coming to its end, the consequences of Iraq and the profound transformation that the Labour Party had suffered throughout these years nurtured the intellectual criticism of the Prime Minister's imminent legacy. In retrospect, writers felt disappointed with what New Labour turned out to be in terms of its perceived conservative approach to social policies. They reminded their readers that the new pro-business Labour Party had abandoned leftist principles of public ownership and redistribution, and supported private enterprise as the key solution for the underfunding of public services. Some of these voices expressed their frustration as they saw that the Labour Party, as a social democratic party, had turned to the centre-right by accepting neoliberal right-wing policies such as "low taxes, private finance initiatives, and people getting filthy rich" (Pullman, 2010). Others observed a new country with no ideals and no ideology, such as novelist Andrew O'Hagan who confessed that New Labour's change of style approached the previous Tory mandate, consequently deceiving the essence and nature of what Labour had been:

> For me, it wasn't only a matter of policies, for policies come and go, some good, some bad, and most of them debatable. With New Labour it was a failure of style: it wasn't just that it moved away from the notion of collective bargaining and fell into a state of toadyish adoration of the City […]. More devastatingly for party politics in this country, New Labour embraced, in domestic and foreign policy, a Tory style of disregard for lives it little understood. (O'Hagan, 2010)

Additionally, the generalised discontent of writers with New Labour was also illustrated in some fiction works of late Blairism. Several writers contributed with their literature to fictionalise this political disaffection, such was the case of author Blake Morrison with his novel *South of the River* (2007), Richard T. Kelly with his novel *Crusaders* (2008), Sue Townsend with *Adrian Mole: The Prostrate Years* (2009) and

David Hare with his play *Gethsemane* (2008).[59] All these works widely depicted a feeling of nostalgia for those early years of New Labour when the British people and many intellectuals received the Blair project with open arms. These texts therefore reinforced the contrast of present-day politics—characterised by a largely spread disenchantment with the government—with those days of early enthusiasm and euphoria after the arrival of Tony Blair in 1997. In this respect, some of the images and scenes portrayed in these stories try to evoke an ironic remembrance of those years of the late 1990s, especially when they are analysed in contrast with later evidences of New Labour's politics. In **Blake Morrison**'s *South of the River*, for instance, "the fissure between the concerns of the characters and the reader's wider historical perspective is the space where the novel's irony operates" (Kelly, Stuart 2008: 55). In that way, the novel functions as a self-reflexive exercise for all those readers who felt similarly enthusiastic and ingenious about the events of the time, namely the arrival of Tony Blair into politics and all the expectations put on him. New Labour's New Dawn, with the party's victory in 1997, embodied the British version of the American Dream: a wave of optimism swamped England, and more concretely the (middle-class) southern England, as "the map of Britain changing colour, a vast bloodstain leaking down from north" while "the country turned red" (Morrison, 2008: 18-19). In this sense, Morrison's novel, although published during Blair's third term, represented a trip in time from 1997 until 2002 when the disillusion with the government was already evident. The novel covered that curve of disappointment that many British people, writers among them, experienced since the Labour victory in 1997. One of Morrison's characters, Nat, the professor and intellectual in *South of the River*, is chosen to illustrate this when he acknowledges that

> Back in 1997, we hoped it would be different. A journalist friend of mine was reminding me only this lunchtime how enthusiastic I'd been when Blair got in. I don't apologise for that. It was a buoyant moment after decades of gloom. And I imagined Blair would be a friend of culture. But the only culture he's been a friend to is scarcely culture at all—second-rate pop musicians and schmaltzy films and giggling plays. (425)

[59] *Gethsemane* is a reflection of Blair's premiership that conveys a feeling of betrayal, disappointment and frustration with contemporary politics, and with how New Labour "embraced pragmatism and lost a sense of purpose" (Fielding, 2009: 379).

This is the best sample of Morrison's disappointment in his novel, an obvious criticism on behalf of the academia and perhaps of most intellectuals that embodied the spread dissatisfaction against the government. This turns the novel, in my view, into a political text, despite the fact that some critics, and the novelist himself, denied the novel being explicitly political. For Geraldine Bedell, for instance, although "there is a dragging sense of unease in the atmosphere, a growing cynicism, disillusionment and fear […] this is not an angry novel" (2007: 26). Also, for D.J. Taylor, "this is not an overtly political book" for the novel is more about the lives of a group of characters simply immersed "in a landscape crowded with real events and real people" (2007: 16). Or as Morrison himself pointed out to me in an interview:

> I did not intend *South of the River* to be a propagandist or polemical novel—one in which an author pushes his ideology. My purpose was, rather, to reflect the texture of the times, the first five years of Tony Blair's New Labour government. None of the characters is especially engaged in politics—not in their work at least. They have ideas about politics, like we all do, but they don't have jobs in politics. So I suppose my novel both is and isn't political—it's set in a particular political era, but it doesn't preach. (Morrison, 2011)

Nevertheless, and despite considerations that state that the novel is not political, *South of the River* is, in essence, a novel about frustration, in the political and in the personal: the emergence of the south bank where these middle-class characters are settled parallels the emergence of the New Labour Party. Yet, the apparent success of the middle classes shows Morrison's paradox, as many of these characters do not feel precisely successful or fulfilled. Frustrated playwright and academic Nat is unable to finish his long-life play, Jack's family enterprise seems to be breaking down slowly, and black journalist Harry still encounters episodes of racism in twenty-first century Britain. A constant frustration and disillusionment looms over New Labour's middle-class citizens, which shows that the New Dawn left, for many, much to be desired.

In this direction, **Richard T. Kelly** also played ironically with the rise of New Labour precisely at the end of the Blair years. His novel *Crusaders* (2008), a story about disappointment and corruption, goes back to the late 1990s in order to remind the reader of the enthusiasm and excitement that the Labour victory generated in 1997. In this retrospective analysis, the author takes a look at the Thatcher years in order to understand the decadent state of working-class Britain; it is precisely in this period of political and historical changes, when the rising New Labour inspired a modernisation

based on "property development" (Gray, 2008: 22), and on its "new engagement with business and money" (O'Brien, 2008: 19). The story eventually poses the question whether it is possible to change without losing values and identity (Turpin, 2008: 1), which interpreted Labour's modernisation as a loss of ideals and ideological principles.

Therefore, Kelly's characterisation of a young Tony Blair, who talks about modernisation and about party schisms, shows Kelly's criticism of how real socialism had gone under New Labour. Kelly's representation of the rise of Blair's project, as the following speech delivered by an imaginary Blair shows, emphasised this profound transformation within Labour's socialist principles, not to mention Blair's abilities to manipulate the socialist discourse in his own benefit:

> *You say your socialism's pure. Purer than mine, I'm sure. Fine. But what do you want to do with that? Other than get people like me to admit we're just rubbish, next to you lot? I do wonder, you know, how long we're going to go over these same old arguments. I mean, what's the ordinary Labour member to make of it? All this talk about witch-hunts—I have to tell you, it sounds self-indulgent. It* looks *horrendous. And for goodness' sake, what's actually in front of us? A simple request that we abide by the constitution and the decision of Conference. Our constitution says there shouldn't be parties within the Party. That's a fact. Yes, fine, socialists should stand up and argue their convictions. But the biggest party is the biggest party. And I don't happen to think there should be sects within it. Full-time agitators. Whose so-called editorial board meet in secret and send down tablets in stone. There should be debate, yes. But also consent—consent that the majority view is the best view, if that view has prevailed democratically*. […] *If you don't like that—if you hate the rest of us so much—then what are you doing here*?" (Kelly, Richard T. 2008: 348)

In tune with this retrospective disenchantment, **Sue Townsend** also expressed her disaffection with New Labour during those later years of Blair's mandate: "Townsend is unequivocal about the extent to which she feels betrayed by the Labour party and how completely her views were changed by the Iraq war" (Clark, 2009: 12). As shown in her novel *Adrian mole: The Prostrate Years* (2009), the author put forth her disillusion through Adrian's adventures, this one set in 2007, the year of Blair's departure and the accession of Gordon Brown. Being a book about personal and political endings, and about "things closing down" (Jordan, 2009: 16), there is a permanent sense of loss: "Everything has gone off since New Labour took over" (Townsend, 2009: 47). Specially the Iraq war tarnished Blair's reputation, and became the recurrent theme that writers, such as Townsend, used to assess his legacy: "When I look at Mr Blair now I

see a weak man who took us into a war because of his own personal vanity. Everything he did for the country seems to be unravelling" (33). That contrasted with the fond memories of the enthusiasm that Blair inspired in the country—and in Townsend's character Adrian—just as Blair entered Number 10 in 1997:

> I was transported back to that glorious May Day when cherry blossom floated in the spring sunshine—as if the trees were throwing confetti to celebrate New Labour's victory. I was young then and full of hope and believed that Mr Blair—with his mantra of "Education, education, education"—would transform England into a land where people at bus stops spoke to each other of Tolstoy and post-structuralism, but it was not to be, my own father thinks that Tate Modern is a new type of sugar cube. (30)

In summation, writers such as Sue Townsend, Hanif Kureishi, Blake Morrison, Richard T. Kelly, Peter Akinti and Philip Pullman demonstrated their disaffection with the outcome of Blair's New Labour either through their fictional representations or through open political declarations at the end of Blair's premiership. As has been shown, by 2007—the year Blair left Downing Street—there existed a generalised feeling that New Labour was eventually different to what these writers had expected, which confirmed the curve of widespread disenchantment that many liberal intellectuals felt with the Blair project: the enthusiasm and the popular clamour held in 1997 vanished and gradually turned into discontent, frustration, anger and disillusion.

However, the prevalent pessimistic perception of Blair by the end of his premiership contrasted with that of **Martin Amis**, who was the first and will be the last writer to be analysed in this chapter. If there was a glimpse of scepticism in Amis back in 1995 with regards to Blair's New Labour—even despite the fact that Amis was a Labour voter himself—that feeling could not be found in 2007 when Blair turned down the leadership of the Labour Party. That year *The Guardian* covered Tony Blair's farewell tour (Washington, Iraq, Belfast) being shadowed by Martin Amis and a Guardian photographer. The result was a slide-documentary with Martin Amis's voice commenting his experience with the Prime Minister, together with an article, "The Long Kiss Goodbye" (2007),[60] that provided both anecdotes of the trip and Amis's thoughts on the Blair legacy.

[60] "The Long Kiss Goodbye" was also published in Amis's collection of essays *The Second Plane* under the title "On the Move with Tony Blair" (2008).

When analysing Amis's article, it is necessary to bear in mind that his descriptions could be interpreted in two directions: they could represent a honest illustration of the author's observations, or they could also be read as ironic criticism. And yet, could there be some truth in that apparent sarcasm? At first, Amis's picture of the Prime Minister might, to certain extent, insinuate an ironic and subtle criticism of the Prime Minister. In fact, for some critics, Amis's picture of Tony Blair entailed a subtle critique: "Amis's travels with Tony Blair, for example, paints a witty, nasty, but also endearing picture of the Prime Minister going about his daily routine—one is hard put to take Amis's elegantly turned sentences seriously" (Perloff, 2008: 5). However, I believe that behind Amis's favourable and benevolent portrait of Tony Blair, which can unequivocally be read in sarcastic terms, there exists a sincere sympathetic leniency towards the Prime Minister, not to mention a subtle admiration for his power and authority. Amis's serious tone is far from being a lampooning photograph of the politician, and instead, it could be interpreted as Amis's political unconscious: behind an apparent irony in his flattering description of Blair, there could exist a sincere veneration and devotion for the so much criticised Prime Minister. From my point of view, Amis's comments on the tour evidenced that the author's sceptical support for Blair in the late 1990s turned into a subtle sympathetic understanding towards the politician by the end of his premiership, and, as Amis himself admitted, into a certain "deplorable flirtation" with the Prime Minister during the trip (Amis, 2007b). That is, Amis's journey into the inside of the Blairite power seems to eventually seduce the writer, because Blair—or "Tony" for Amis—is a politician with a special "tender" sensibility and strong human capacities: "He [Blair] is more physically impressive, more sensitive and much more playful than the man on your TV screen" (2007b). Moreover, Amis also appears astonished by the surrounding elegance of power: "The atmosphere in these corridors, the aides, the secret servicemen, the odd wandering pol with hair as rigid as caramel or marzipan, doesn't remind you of anything else. A futuristic academy, perhaps, of pure power" (2007b). Amis seems astound by Blair's exquisite authority and his halo of self-confidence, moral views and determination; the author is therefore quite indulgent with Blair and shows himself delighted with the idea of power.

Likewise, during the trip they both made to Baghdad, Amis also commented on the war. Although it is difficult to see whether his ideas on the conflict actually reveal his support or opposition to the war, there is a constant feeling that Amis's views justify

the moral rationale of the invasion, while describing anti-war activists as "semi-literate" (2007b). In this respect, he insists that his support towards the war was "nonexistent until it actually began" (2007b), condoning Blair's determination to lead the war—even although it later turned into a "predictable disaster" (Amis, 2007a). Gradually, the author's sympathetic and supportive views on the Prime Minister apparently increase, being eventually magnified when Amis admires Blair's strength and integrity, also his bravery for not wearing a headgear or a flak jacket in such a place (Amis admitted his fear in this hazardous territory): "The rest of us, by this stage, were carapaced in sweat and grit. But Tony crossed the runway like a true exceptionalist—one of the chosen, the saved, the elect" (Amis, 2007b). He also asserts: "It was difficult not to admire him just for physically getting through these sessions" (Amis, 2007a). In these declarations, Blair's personal qualities, his professionalism, his personal strength, his experience, and his intelligence seem to move the writer.

As mentioned above, although it could be easy to interpret Amis's words with an ironic intention, I here defend that behind that hypothetical irony, and due to Amis's serious and respectful tone in his writing and in his voice over recording, one cannot avoid to wonder how much truth there is in Amis's feelings and thoughts. Amis's simple anecdotes reveal the writer's elitist feelings, and his own prejudices against the common people—those "fools and losers" (Amis, 2007b)—or against anti-war protesters—the "semi-literate;" this is not simple satire, but "bile" prejudices (Tepperman, 2008: 77). Contrastingly, Amis also seems amazed by Blair's charming aura of power and authority, and feels compassion for a man who has to go through innumerable boring sessions and still smiles. This "poor Tony" message that Amis conveys was, for some critics, "beyond respectful. It's fanboy" (Cretan, 2007).

Therefore, Amis's sympathy for Tony Blair ultimately confirms the writer's detachment from any oppositional stand, and instead, approaches him to the exclusive hegemonic elite that recognises Blair's morality, determination, and his capacity for leadership. That is, "Kingsleyfication, the condition of the young wit gone aging reactionary, has set in. What Amis is tenderer towards is not life itself but power, authority" (2007), which leads to ask oneself whether Amis's position towards Tony Blair makes him a clear antagonist figure, or actually, a compassionate admirer:

> Power is this great stimulant and aphrodisiac […] It has to get you through so much painful routine of being agreeable, you know, the *douceing* of politics, he

> [Blair] was a supreme douceur, he knows when someone needs a phone call, when someone needs a pat on the back, when someone needs a favour, a handshake… It must be like having thirty or forty fights every day, not aggression, but just persistence […] not very exciting all that, but very much part of what he does. (Amis, 2007a)

If the writer was sceptical of the widespread intellectual support for the Labour leader back in 1995, his perception seemed to have changed by 2007 when Blair left the government. Amis, despite his evident political commitment to present day world issues, does not respond to the concept of intellectual as a systematic counter-power figure against the Blair government; he seems, instead, quite ambiguous, contradictory or sometimes indulgent with it. Thus, according to the theories that I use to determine and classify these writers as counter-hegemonic intellectuals, Amis could not be considered a subversive figure opposed to the politics of Tony Blair. As previously stated, Gramsci, Foucault and Said would define the intellectual according to a nonconformist and oppositional function that categorically aims to counteract the established power, overthrow its hegemony and defend the rights of the unrepresented. Amis's seemingly compassion and tolerance with the Prime Minister are far from the enraged political activism that these critics suggested was necessary to exemplify the public role of the intellectual. Gramsci, for instance, emphasised the revolutionary attitude of organic intellectuals who, in their position of leaders and organisers, had to depose the dominant power by remaining faithful to the organic demands of the popular classes: intellectuals had to resist the dominant class with "an organic programme of government which would reflect the essential demands of the popular masses" (Gramsci, 1971: 61). Amis's indulgence with power—Blair in this case—and his prejudiced statements against the common citizen or the underrepresented anti-war protesters—who actually fight to expose a counter-hegemonic version of the war—make of Amis's political position a perfect example of the *traison* of the intellectual; that is, when the intellectual who is politically engaged betrays the organic demands of the class he or she claims to represent and suddenly integrates himself or herself in the hegemonic class. Amis's attitude seems to betray the aim of the intellectual: to represent a nonconformist oppositional function against Blair's power by challenging the status quo; instead, the writer seems seduced by power, amazed by Blair's halo of heroism, and captivated by his temperament.

Correspondingly, Foucault also defended the need for a complete challenge against power, as well as a denunciation of every instance in which people suffer the influence of power: "This is a struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious power" (Foucault and Deleuze, 1977: 208). This shows that Amis's attitude is not the one of responding back to power, but instead, of walking alongside it as Blair's escort in his trip. That is not an example of the counter-power struggle of the intellectual; it is rather the subjugation of the critical view to the interests of the powerful. The intellectual has, this time for Said, to challenge "justifications of power" (Said, 1996: 22) as an outsider, as a peripheral voice in order to remain his/her critical detachment and be able to contest power. Travelling with Tony Blair does not seem to be the way of remaining distant and detached from power or from any circle of influence, for the intellectual can, as I have exposed above, easily lose its critical voice, and contrarily, become too understanding and too benevolent with the authority he or she is supposed to oppose.

4.4 FINAL THOUGHTS

The present chapter has examined some of the reactions of liberal fiction writers to Tony Blair's premiership (1997—2007). This historical-chronological analysis of the most relevant oppositional writers—along with a study of some of their most significant critical texts—has made possible to observe the evolution of the intellectuals' perceptions with regards to the New Labour government, from the beginnings of Blair's project and his subsequent victory in the 1997 election to the gradual disenchantment experienced by the time of his resignation in 2007. As earlier mentioned, 1 May 1997 is often remembered for the atmosphere of enthusiasm raised by the arrival of a young and popular Prime Minister that promised to redress Britain's state of decadence after the conservative era. Many liberal writers, such as Jonathan Coe, Fay Weldon, Sue Townsend, Alistair Beaton, Julian Barnes, Andrew O'Hagan and Peter Akinti among others confessed having hopeful expectations in a prospective Labour victory, even despite the fact that some of them were openly sceptical and critical about Blair's modernisation.

Labour's honeymoon met its end in 2001 when the al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center roused Blair's unconditional support for President George W. Bush. The

Iraq war then set off a movement of unprecedented outrage that led the British people to protest in a historical massive demonstration in London on 15 February 2003 and incited many writers to publicly react against the government for what they considered an unlawful war. Writers such as Sue Townsend, David Hare, Jonathan Coe, Harold Pinter, Ian McEwan and Robert Harris participated in the controversial debate and many of them sharply opposed the invasion. The initial wave of massive support given to Labour in the late 1990s gradually vanished, and Blair became a demonised figure that aroused frustration, anger and disillusion in many British writers, writers who had previously supported the Labour Party. Moreover, Blair's U-turn in Labour's management of social services progressively revealed a new privatising tendency that consolidated Thatcher's economic reforms. This neoliberal mentality was broadly criticised by left-wing analysts and many fiction writers who witnessed a rise in social inequalities and the underfunding of public services. As Jonathan Coe declared to me in an interview:

> There was tremendous enthusiasm and optimism for Tony Blair in 1997 and the evolution was quite simple really, gradually people became more and more disillusioned because they found that what they were expecting from Tony Blair was a break from Thatcherism, as it became clear that economically, what he was doing was not that different to Mrs Thatcher. (Coe, 2010b)

The curve of disenchantment was unmistakeable by the end of Blair's premiership as deception and disillusion occupied the narratives and the public utterances of many fiction writers. The general perception was that New Labour had turned to the right, as Blair's measures in health and education appeared mere window dressing for an evident neoliberal government that prioritised private enterprise.

Despite the writers' widespread dissatisfaction, they never functioned as a collective entity. As I have mentioned in the present chapter, the spectrum of intellectuals was diverse in their backgrounds, opinions, political ideologies, degree of commitment, and the oppositional styles utilised to publicly comment and criticise British politics. The selection of writers collected in this research responds to the aim of projecting the reality of the time from different angles: from those more traditionally rebellious writers, writers that performed a radical activism to oppose the government (i.e. activist Harold Pinter, socialist writer Sue Townsend), to those who, despite being consolidated middle-class writers, exerted a coherent and categorical critique of Blair's

politics and contributed to the intellectual resistance to Blair's conservatism (Jonathan Coe, Robert Harris, Julian Barnes, Fay Weldon, Blake Morrison). Others, however, although part of the liberal intelligentsia during the previous decade, were now politically ambivalent or more supportive of Blair's decisions (Martin Amis, Ian McEwan).

Additionally, within this diversity of writers and writing styles, I have included pieces of popular fiction with the aim to broaden the scope of oppositional action to other forms of writing on the margins of canonical literature. In that way, best-selling writers such as Sue Townsend, Robert Harris and Richard T. Kelly, and commercial authors such as Jonathan Coe and Blake Morrison have been included in this study alongside well-established and reputed voices such as Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, Margaret Drabble, Ian McEwan, Harold Pinter and Fay Weldon. It is thus my intention to give room to new voices that have been normally excluded as outside academic recognition (it is not coincidence that very little academic writing has paid attention to these popular novels mentioned above) in order to ultimately vindicate their influential role and effective function when they categorically accuse the government of misbehaviour, portray the social injustices of the time and deconstruct the official discourses that have prevailed during Blair's premiership.

Having now an overall perspective of the function of many of these critical writers and the functionality of their texts, I can conclude that it was precisely the literature of those popular best-selling and commercial authors that was the most intense in terms of their straightforward denunciation of particular aspects of Blairism—economic reforms, the Iraq war, the U-turn in the party ideology, the underfunding of public services—whereas those who bask in erudite recognition (with the exception of Harold Pinter) have been either too indulgent with power or not very systematic in their political criticism. Writers such as Fay Weldon, Julian Barnes and Margaret Drabble, despite their initial criticism of the Blair project in those early years of New Labour, did not contribute with relevant samples to the political debate of the time during the rest of Blair's premiership. Contrastingly, popular and best-selling author Sue Townsend has been a systematic critical voice opposed to the outcome of Blairism from the beginning to the end, as every one of her novels and public statements have been loaded with categorical political attacks on the government. Also, Harris's *The Ghost*—despite the contradiction of the writer himself who as a millionaire is too attached to the political establishment—is one of the decisive counter-power narratives of the decade, along

with others such as Morrison's *South of the River* and Coe's *The Closed Circle*. It is thus my intention to emphasise the relevance of popular and commercial literature in its oppositional and subversive function. This is precisely what Robert Harris himself defended in an interview. For Harris, when popular fiction deals with complex issues of contemporary life and contemporary politics, it helps the audience approach history from an entertaining and understandable perspective: "I'm a great believer that popular fiction, not just literary fiction, but popular fiction can take an audience […] into serious world issues" (Harris in *NPR Books*, 2011). The effect of popular fiction is, for Harris, unmistakable:

> You can be really quite subversive in popular fiction, which is capable of taking on big issues of politics, war, the rise and fall of commercial dynasties. Big things like that are often left to popular fiction, whereas literary fiction is all the words on the page, and the prose, and the shimmering remembrance of loss, or whatever. In these books, you can really engage with the world. (Harris in Edemariam, 2007: 4)

In this respect, Angela Locatelli confirms Harris' views that popular fiction, in its "ludic" intention, also entails political and subversive functions:

> One must acknowledge a paradoxical joining of the political and the apolitical in postmodern literary and critical discourse: the presence of a strong meta-discursive and self-referential element in postmodern fiction shows that a ludic and self-serving intention often coexist with the subversive positioning of discourse itself on the threshold, and even at the heart, of crucial political and ethical issues. (2011: 227)

As stated in chapter three of this dissertation, the shapes of the contemporary subversive writer might detach from canonical spheres of writing and now approach other forms of mainstream and popular writing. The new sociological spectrum of political dissidence might be closer to a form of trivialised popular fiction, sometimes contradictorily produced by wealthy and best-selling commercial authors that effectively perform the role of intellectual opposition through controversial statements and nonconformist actions.

Lastly, it has been argued that many of the writers here included contributed to the "subversive" writing that was produced to deconstruct, debilitate and diminish Tony Blair's power and his dominant hegemonic views. Although not all of these writers were systematic oppositional figures against the government, nor could they be

analysed in strictly counter-hegemonic terms, it is essential to underline the role that many of these voices had, at a particular moment with their narratives and their public statements, in the opposition to New Labour between 1997 and 2007. Many of them participated, with different degrees of political commitment, in the intellectual resistance to the existing power, and attempted to counteract and deconstruct the official discourse of Blairism with their counter-power denunciations and their political novels. These writers contributed therefore to the intellectual dissidence of the time by making use of their role as public figures, expressing their opinions and convictions, and promoting political awareness and political commitment.

5. CRITICS AND THEORISTS: IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON BLAIRISM

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the oppositional criticism that intellectuals, and most specifically critics and theorists, produced during Tony Blair's government. It is our aim to study the British intellectual dissidents that questioned Blair's hegemony and the establishment of his indisputable authority during the years 1997—2007. These intellectual figures and their texts, mainly essayistic prose published in newspapers and political magazines (*New Statesman*, *Marxism Today*), conform the first collection of the existing criticism of Blair's premiership until today. These critics are the committed writers who devoted their time and efforts to opposing Blairism, and developed a steady political opposition from a more theoretical perspective. In contrast with the previous chapter, these thinkers and critics examined Blairism exclusively in political terms: their essays and journalistic columns were explicit analyses, sometimes as categorical attacks, of the weaknesses of Blair's project. Contrary to the literary intellectuals, whose artistic creations intertwine an aesthetic function and a political interpretation of reality, these theorists expose their opinions without literary or artistic ambitions. Their essays and columns in newspapers represent an up-front declaration of their thoughts and personal reactions to the political programme of Tony Blair.

As I have argued in chapter one of this dissertation, it is the aim of this study not only to gather, but also to reflect upon the cultural productions of those thinkers whose writings contributed to construct a cultural understanding of a decade. It is precisely the analysis of culture from different perspectives—either from the literary or the more

theoretical/political perspective—what builds a "transdisciplinary study" of culture, using Fredric Jameson's nomenclature (Hardt and Weeks, 2001: 2). Twentieth-century critics—among whom we can highlight Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams—emphasised the importance of thinking culture from a holistic perspective and as a "whole way of life" (Williams, 1963: 12) in order to promote the development of mankind and the growth of a better society. The mentioned critics explored the political reality of Britain during previous decades in order to create a fairer society by protecting the rights of the underprivileged and denouncing the abuses of the powerful. Alan Sinfield declared in his reputed book *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (1989) that the *raison d'être* of postwar intellectuals was having a common spirit to beat injustice and poverty in order to improve living standards and making this world a better place (Sinfield, 1989: 1). His book articulates a reflection on how "influential writings […] address current preoccupations" (2). For Sinfield, there is a particular need to analyse any piece of cultural writing as "intellectual resistance," since "through literary culture, in part, the left-liberal intelligentsia […] have established their identities and framed their critiques" (2). Other political analysts, such as John Keane, also remarked that "the highest aim of the political writer of books, pamphlets, and newspaper columns was to warn and defend citizens against arbitrary exercises of power in the spheres of civil society and the State" (Keane, 1996: 4). This belligerent and committed action that Sinfield and Keane identify today originates in, and is expressed through all spheres of culture: on the one hand, through unpopular representations of culture, and on the other, through more elitist and intellectual demonstrations of political analysts and theoretical critics. This chapter therefore integrates a selection of theorists, reputed critics and figures of the media who participated in the counter-power discourses and the ethical analyses of British culture and politics in specialised magazines and newspapers. In tune with theories that examine the role of the intellectual, I would like to retake the notion of a contemporary intellectual, whose open, non-elitist and egalitarian public voice opposes the prevailing power either through specialised and academic channels, or through more popular means of communication like newspapers.

Many left-wing intellectuals at the turn of the twenty-first century reacted against what they considered Blair's hegemony and his disputed conservative policies. Among those thinkers who had a more active role when commenting Blair's performance in Number 10 we can mention Alex Callinicos, Andrew Marr, Eric Hobsbawm, John Gray,

Simon Jenkins, Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques, Tony Judt, Will Hutton, David Marquand, Polly Toynbee, Roy Hattersley and Geoff Mulgan, many of them on the left and with some exceptions on the centre-right. As will be argued, some of these critics experienced disenchantment with Tony Blair as leader of the Labour Party after having acclaimed him and supported him to win the 1997 election. Others, however, remained sceptical from the beginning.

In this chapter, the analysis of these thinkers follows the chronological criterion that has also structured the previous chapter, thus aiming to show a rising sense of disenchantment that some British intellectuals presented during the Blair years, moving from their first reactions when the Prime Minister initially became leader of the party, towards a later disappointment with Blair's decisions in power. To begin with, I will focus on the first critics who reacted, either positively or negatively, to New Labour's modernisation after the election of Blair as leader of the party. "Political Criticism Prior to Blair's Premiership" deals with many of the voices that supported Blair's modernisation project, since they had already suggested that the Labour Party was in dire need of revising its founding principles in order to integrate itself in the well-established capitalist society. Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques were among those voices that advocated for a change of direction within the left during the 1980s, and contributed to the revisionist debate with relevant texts such as *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (1988), and *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* (1989). New Labour seemed to consolidate their early expectations, and some of these theorists consequently supported, and hoped for a Labour victory in the 1997 election. Yet, other voices, despite their blessing that the Labour candidate won the election, were critical of Blair's modernisation because it conveyed a particular dogmatism more proper of the Conservative Party. Andrew Marr and Alex Callinicos were among those who soon glimpsed Blair's abandonment of egalitarianism and his then defence of the markets and the pro-business society even before he entered Downing Street. Nevertheless, by 1998 many of these brains already envisaged what Blairism was meant to be and they categorically reacted against the government. "Early Disenchantment: *Marxism Today* 1998" reflects upon the intellectual criticism of the Blair government as is put forth in the 1998 special issue of the already extinct political magazine *Marxism Today*. This early illustration of the British intellectuals' disappointment will constitute one of the most important pieces in

this research. The evolution of these critics' position towards British politics will be demonstrated with later publications. "Increasing Disenchantment: Blair's Second Term (2001—2005)" shows how a number of social democrats like Will Hutton, David Marquand and Tony Judt, some of them supporters of Blair's modernisation, became profoundly disenchanted with the real outcome of Blair's anti-social measures. Also, Iraq would incite innumerable opponents to protest against the invasion, such as Hugo Young, Simon Jenkins, Polly Toynbee and John Gray. Finally, "Blair's End and his Legacy (2005—2007)"—the shorter section in this chapter for it only covers Blair's last two years in office—illustrates the eventual disillusion of intellectuals with the Prime Minister through the analysis of the articles that appeared in the special issue of the magazine *New Statesman* in 2007, as well as those published in the *World Socialist Web Site* the very same year, where critics such as Suzanne Moore, David Hare, David Marquand, Geoff Mulgan, John Gray, John Lloyd and Peter Wilby, among others, reflected upon Blair's legacy as the confirmed continuation of Thatcher's ideology.

5.1 POLITICAL CRITICISM PRIOR TO BLAIR'S PREMIERSHIP

With the resignation of Margaret Thatcher on 22 November 1990, some of the traditionally committed Marxist intellectuals revived critical debates about the state of the Labour Party and its condition as a sturdy opposition to the Conservative Party. As briefly stated in previous chapters of this dissertation, **Stuart Hall** joined in the controversy and suggested the need of the Labour Party to readjust itself in order to firmly face the conservative government and thus constitute a substantial opposition. Hall's early book *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (1988), which regarded the long established impasse of the Labour Party, thoroughly examined the success of Thatcherism so as to present the social, political and cultural causes for it to take place, while also discussed the necessary conditions for the left to repeatedly lose elections and its ideological horizon. Although this dissertation does not intend to delve into the previous political era of Thatcherism, I will try to briefly mention Hall's contribution to the debate of the crisis of the left shortly before Blair came into power for two major reasons: first, because the preliminary state of the Labour Party had direct consequences on Blair's modernisation project; secondly, and most importantly, because Hall's evolution as a counter-power persona will be evident

during the pre-Blair years and beyond. Hall's awareness of the need of modernisation of the party and Blair's consequent performance in office will make this intellectual firstly approach and later distance himself from the Blairite project.

For Hall, the rise of Thatcherism was driven in part by the crisis of the left, which was unable to provide an answer to the constituting modern society, and unable to answer the challenge that Thatcherism represented: "I have tried to suggest how damaging has been Labour's failure to establish itself as a leading cultural force in civil society, popular culture and urban life" (Hall, 1990: 9). Both phenomena, the rise of Thatcherism and the crisis of the left, were, for Hall, deep-seated in a global crisis of English identity: after the loss of the empire, the new social and ethnic realities, and the fragmentation of the working class, the party merged into a delicate state of historic and cultural underdetermination. Wendy Brown, analysing Hall's book, declares: "This […] is consequent to the Left's own failure to apprehend the character of the age and to develop a political critique and a moral-political vision appropriate to this character" (Brown, 1999: 19). The new age required a new political vision that, according to Hall, Thatcherism had succeeded to accomplish, unlike the left (Procter, 2004: 99). In this respect, Hall wondered whether Labour could respond equally to social justice and individual progress, and adapt itself to the new economic order without generating inequality, unemployment and poverty (Hall, 1990: 12). He was aware that any readjustment in Labour's ideology could approach the party to the conservative opposition, and any reforms could make Labour embrace the conservative neoliberal legacy. The author had already witnessed the historical contribution of Labour to the capitalist state when becoming an economic "manager of the capitalist crisis" (31) and making the state perform a leading role in the capitalist game. On many occasions, as Hall stated, it had precisely been the Labour Party "which applied the surgical cut to the welfare state" (40). For Hall, when the left is in crisis, its contradictions, its lack of consensus and its fragmentation contributes to the rise of the right: "No one seriously concerned with the development of left political strategies in the present situation can afford to ignore the 'swing to the right' […] There is still some debate as to whether it is likely to be short lived or long-term" (39). In the end, later critics have often defended that Labour's turn to the right eventually occurred as a permanent transformation.

When Hall wrote the essays of his book in the late 1980s, he suggested that the left, and Labour in particular, had to understand politics and society from a multifaceted

perspective with its fragmentation and pluralism (Kirk, 2002: 343). For Hall, a successful political project entailed a "production" of a strategy able to address "not one, but to a diversity of different points of antagonism in society; unifying them, in their differences, within a common project" (Hall, 1990: 171). In other words, one of the causes of the failure of the left was based on the anachronistic belief that ideology was a rigid set of principles. In turn, Hall suggested that the left had to understand that the new socioeconomic reality had forced political leadership to adapt to the multiple realities of our societies by offering them a unified project. He continued: "It is imperative that the Labour Party must form an alliance with the other opposition parties" (Purdy, 1992: 293). At first glance, this seemed to be what the Blair project actually embodied: an attempt to unify different points of antagonism offering them a common programme. However, it is necessary to point out that one of the commonly-known criticisms of Blairism was not precisely that he offered a unified common project to please antagonistic views of society, but just the opposite: Blairism promised and delivered mostly right-wing socioeconomic reforms with a touch of the social democratic spirit, causing the subsequent disappointment of many followers. Blairism had become a contradiction, rather than a unified project.

However, even before Blairism existed, Hall seemed to be very aware of the reality of his country and the failing direction of the Labour Party, which was, despite some modernisation, still dependent on obsolete Keynesian beliefs. As he stated: "I honestly believe that option is now closed. It's exhausted. Nobody believes in it any more. […] The ordinary British people won't vote for it because they know in their bones that life is not like that any more" (Hall, 1990: 172). For Hall, the left, and Labour in particular, was "intellectually frozen" and was "insensitive to the need to organise a new majority behind a new ideology" (Parekh, 1988: 33-34). Similarly, Hall also criticised the futility of Clause IV of the party constitution—which fostered old Fabian precepts and maintained an inflexible formalism in a changing society (Hall, 1990: 212)—while the party was reluctant to accept that consumer capitalism had become the ordinary culture that had seduced society, including the working class. According to Ross Coomber in his review of Hall's book, "the Left […] should take account, as Thatcherism has, of the changing shape of British society and develop new ideas […] rather than defend the old, which are unable to inspire" (Coomber, 1989: 839). Stuart Hall was therefore committed to a new left aware of the challenges of contemporary life, and able to provide "a renewal of the whole socialist project in the

context of modern social and cultural life" (Hall, 1990: 173). For Hall, the left's disconnection from reality was a direct result of the party's inability to organise

> a popular political and ideological struggle […] It shows less and less capacity to connect with popular feelings and sentiments, let alone transform them or articulate them to the left. […] [It is] increasingly out of touch with what is going on in everyday life around it. (207)

Hall's statement anticipated Blair's future project. It was precisely the Prime Minister's young, attractive and modern image that connected New Labour's politics with the British people; it was Blair's magnetism and his knowledge of the contemporary reality of British society that connected the new politics of Labour with the people's needs. Perhaps this is how we can explain one of the many causes of Blair's success in the late 1990s, and it seems that Hall's understanding of British society and its people in the previous decade already glimpsed what would happen years later. In this respect, we could also understand why Hall's instincts concerning a need of modernisation in British politics would make him welcome Blair's new left with optimism. Hall's analysis of contemporary society and the state and needs of the Labour Party anticipated some of the reforms that Blair would later promise and implement. Blair's modernisation project—a populist strategy aimed to reach and attach the British people to a new political idea—and the apparent consensus that New Labour represented (joining left- and right-wing policies) allegedly delivered some of the claims that Hall had visualised. It is not surprising that when Blair became leader of the party, the critic timidly supported his project. However, as will be argued, it would not last for long.

Still in the pre-Blair years, the debate on the state of Labour continued. Shortly after Hall's *The Hard Road to Renewal*, **Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques**—editors of political magazine *Marxism Today*—contributed with a common project to the revisionism of the left. Entitled *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* (1989), it was a collection of essays in which intellectuals of the time, writing for *Marxism Today*, founded the political debate of the state of the left by encouraging its modernisation and accepting that the new times required a new left (Procter, 2004: 103). Among the writers of the *New Times* project were editors Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, and collaborators Charlie Leadbeater, David Held, David Marquand, Neal Ascherson, Geoff Mulgan, Beatrix Campbell, David Edgar, Robin Murray, Fred

Steward, John Urry, Göran Thernborn and Rosalind Brunt. The text became an attempt to provide an alternative to the existing left in order to face "the historic changes in capitalism" (99). For Hall and other leftist intellectuals, it was necessary to accept that capitalism, consumption and other "narcissistic pleasures" had trapped many Labour supporters (McRobbie, 1990: 128), so they tried to be sympathetic with "these social needs while maintaining the commitment to social democracy, social equality and social justice" (128). Therefore, *New Times*, often analysed as "an attack to left-wing dogma" (Rojek, 2003: 4), was the challenge of the left to develop a response to its own failures, as well as the opportunity to confront the dilemmas of Thatcherism as it emphasised that "a general structural change in society, economy and culture had occurred" (160); the *New Times* thesis hoped to provide an answer to these recent developments.

In the light of the latter, the *New Times* proposal seemed to connect with the later Third Way philosophy. Will Leggett, in his article entitled "New Labour's Third Way: From 'New Times' to 'No Choice'" (2000), stated that *New Times* was going to become the antecedent of the future Third Way ideology propounded by Anthony Giddens and defended by Tony Blair (2000: 27). Leggett observed that the *New Times* intellectuals were criticised for acknowledging the success of Thatcherism, considering the sociological shifts that precipitated the Thatcher project (27). Yet, this author insisted that the difference between *New Times* and the Third Way lay in the belief that the writers of *Marxism Today* allowed a space for socialism, while Giddens had taken too much of neoliberalism (28). All in all, Leggett concluded, "such has been the success of New Labour in appropriating *New Times* that Hall is even ironically seen as one of the fathers of the New Labour project" (28).

In tune with *New Times*, Hall and Jacques continued their political deliberation when they wrote for *The Independent* an article entitled "Revolution, Fifties-style; Labour will Gain Power only if it Becomes a Party of Vision" (1990). These critics voiced the reality of the early 1990s as well as what they regarded as the Thatcher legacy; in their view, the Labour Party, which had changed after the long conservative rule, was unprepared to argue against the new situation. On the one hand, the party had to face Thatcher's retreat in 1990 with new arguments, and on the other, the decay of the party's intellectualism required a modernisation of its theoretical pillars: "The nature of the party's intellectual transformation in the late Eighties raises serious doubts about its capacity to respond to the new situation. Labour needs to define what the party is for, rather than what it is against" (Hall and Jacques, 1990: 19). These theorists

highlighted that Labour, with the "Kinnock revolution,"[61] was going through an intellectual or theoretical crisis lacking ideas, as

> the intellectual eddies around Labour's renewal barely ripple the surface. Each shadow minister has a team of backroom advisers; but that is different from creating an intellectual movement to influence a wider society. The new Labour Party […] has disciplined the hard political questions out of existence. Tailoring, packaging and presentation are all that count. (19)

One of the most persistent critiques of Labour concerned the party's reliance on past forms of revisionism, that is to say, the "revisionism of the Crosland-Gaitskell era" that put the party's ideology to the right under social circumstances proper of a different time:

> At the time, Labour's revisionists offered an alternative to Conservatism, and therefore had to be taken seriously—even though they were eventually proved wrong […] The problem using the Crosland revolution as a blueprint for Labour policy in the Nineties is that it was a response to conditions in the Fifties. (19)

For Hall and Jacques, the Labour Party was unable to give an answer to the new socioeconomic reality and failed to provide a constructive alternative: the hegemony of the free market, a new social class structure, and the increasing cost of the growing welfare state put the party in a decisive dilemma, since any reform or modification in their strategy would cause disenchantment among the party's traditional supporters (19). It seemed that Hall and Jacques could glimpse a hypothetical disillusionment with Labour following the late changes in British society: any movement either to the left or to the right within the party would be both interpreted as a disappointment and a lack of consensus. At the closing of their article, the critics pointed out that the intellectual crisis hindered the party from offering its supporters a productive alternative: "The party has no project of its own. It lives in the shadow of others" (19).

The ideological crisis within the Labour Party would reach its turning point on 12 May 1994, when John Smith, leader of the party, suddenly died of a stroke, leaving the

[61] The Kinnock revolution refers to the era when Neil Kinnock was leader of Labour from 1983 to 1992, precisely during the most part of the Thatcher years. His "revolution" began as a timid modernisation of the party against what it was considered the hard left of Tony Benn. His new position in the party would not be consolidated until Tony Blair became leader of Labour in 1994, actually implementing and spreading reforms within the party that were considered to be, by many, centre-right policies.

party without leadership and with the need to find an immediate substitute. As previously seen, although Gordon Brown was considered Smith's natural heir, it was Tony Blair who unexpectedly emerged as the ideal candidate to run the next general election in 1997, and whose freshness and charisma made him appear as exactly what Labour needed to fight the long-established conservative power. Consequently, the election-winning machine was running with the new elected leader, his principles and beliefs were gradually released, his programme of modernisation and consensus was disclosed, and meanwhile the messianic politician earned popularity among his opponents. The media reported on the rise of the young Tony Blair and many analysts and journalists anticipated a potential victory of Labour, as they commented on this emerging figure: they tried to search in his origins and evaluate what direction the new Labour Party would take.

British journalist, political analyst and editor **Andrew Marr** contributed to the expectation of the time creating the journalistic narrative of the young politician and his ascendancy to power. He was later on to become one of the journalists who followed Blair's career and the ups and downs of New Labour when writing for *The Independent* and *The Observer* during the years 1994 to 2000. Generally speaking, Andrew Marr reported the creation of Blairism from its origins to its later breakup and contributed to the intellectual analysis and political debate of Blair's project. Nevertheless, studying the persona of Andrew Marr as a counter-power intellectual must be expressed with due caution. Although Marr has been a liberal outspoken left-wing critic (McCann, 2000: 2), his intense contribution to the analysis of New Labour's evolving path is far from making of him a systematic belligerent and dissident voice. Among left-wing critics, Marr has not been a radical opponent of New Labour, but a sometimes-controversial pundit of Blair's weaknesses, as well as of his strengths. His columns about Blairism sceptically observed the various measures that the government was implementing, subsequently becoming an up-to-date commentator of Blair's evolution during his first years in the party: from the party's flirtation with the Euro to the war in Kosovo, from public spending on health and education to constitutional reform, from the party's ideological conservatism to Blair's Christian beliefs, from local elections to Rupert Murdoch, from the scandals of Peter Mandelson to "Cool Britannia." Marr has gone through every single aspect of Blairism, he has dissected it, scrutinised it and emphasised sometimes its strengths, but mainly its contradictions, weaknesses and

disappointments. It is easy to draw a chronological outline of Blair's politics and the anti-hegemonic reactions against Blairism through Marr's columns.

Due to the large amount and diversity of Marr's criticism, I have focused on some of the journalist's first key publications that measured the rise of the newly elected Labour leader. Marr's descriptions and personal appreciations trace Blair's ascent, as well as the criticism that his modernising project incited. From 1994 onwards, when Blair was elected leader of the party, political analysts were eager to discover the causes of his success, what his programme of renewal would entail, and what new direction the party would take to face the forthcoming 1997 election. During those early years, Marr's writings targeted the ambiguity and uncertainty of what the new leader of the opposition stood for, while remarking the astonishing ascent of the young Blair. On the one hand, it seemed that Blair's youth and apparent inexperience made him seem a mysterious leader without a traditional and consistent philosophy, whose speeches, first reforms and promises made him a radical if they were to be true. On the other hand, the "Labour leader's sense of self-belief, a mental energy" that surprised his opponents within and outside the party (Marr, 1994a: 19) turned him into the long-awaited hope that Labour needed: "The policy wonks, politicians and aides around Blair are young and enthusiastic and optimistic—no eye without its gleam; no step without its spring; no problem without its answer (even if the answer hasn't yet been found)" (19). An early enthusiasm pervaded the media at all levels and the country as a whole, and the young leader's determination to prove himself as the answer and hope for Labour supporters (and others too) counteracted with a premature instinct that the new party also lacked a sense of direction:

> Tony Blair has accomplished a lot in a short time, but the overriding impression is of how much remains to be done. A bit of economics here, constitutional reform there, but nothing so far brings it together in the "New Britain" of the conference slogan. There is satire about Tory failure, but there isn't a vision. (Marr, 1994b: 17)

Journalists Rebecca Smithers and Seumas Milne, writing for *The Guardian*, reported on the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting in 1996 when the first draft of the party manifesto was released. Many policies were published that defiantly confused reformists and left-wingers: the latter were specially wary about the non-consideration of traditional Labour pledges such as full employment, rise of taxes on the wealthy, fight against racism, and improvement in public services (Smithers and

Milne, 1996: 5). Contrastingly, Blair also announced the renationalisation of the rail and the coal industries, aggravating the sense of bewilderment. Likewise, in face of this feeling that the rising New Labour still lacked a specific vision, Andrew Marr considered that the challenge of the new party was to detach itself from the old inflexible statism in order to create a real alternative and follow the already-begun path of radical politics: there was no return for Labour, Marr propounded (Marr, 1994b: 17). However, at the same time, Marr, together with Simon Jenkins among other authorised journalists that exhaustively reported on Blair's ascendancy in the media, similarly emphasised the politician's embryonic conservatism. Blair's opposition to the trade unions, his intention to abolish Clause IV of the party constitution and his declared affair with capitalism and the free market made him another conservative in the Labour Party: "All successful Labour leaders come to the top from the centre-left, then move smartly rightwards" (Jenkins, 1994: 16).

Moreover, Blair's rapport with millionaire moguls contradicted the leader's animosity towards wealthy donors who granted relevant sums to the Conservative Party. Upscale publisher Paul Hamlyn, for instance, funded a considerable part of the publishing cost of Labour's early manifesto (Smithers and Milne, 1996: 5), and other former conservative donors now looked to the Labour Party (Leathley, Pierce and Campbell, 1994: 2). Blair's affair with the conservative business sector was therefore reciprocal. "The Lords of the Market" suddenly changed forms and supported Labour: "The big boys make their peace with what they think is the next government" (Marr, 1995a: 17). The establishment foresaw New Labour given to business and private enterprise, and they turned their support for the new party:

> Is the establishment changing sides? And if so, what does it mean for Labour's "young Britain"? The big business players of the Thatcher-Major era are turning their attention to Tony Blair's new Labour. Rupert Murdoch's News International, Sir Iain Vallance of British Telecom, Richard Branson, Lord Rothermere of Associated Newspapers—all give the impression that they now see Blair as Prime Minister-elect. (17)

The big boys of business, as Andrew Marr called them, betrayed traditional conservatism and suddenly supported what would end up labelled as neo-conservatism: the new Labour of the new establishment? Marr wondered. It was "humiliating" for the Conservatives, business was being "disloyal," and however, "business is unsentimental.

Business is business" after all (17). A two sided effect was taking place with Labour's new strategy: on the one hand, some factions of the conservative backbench, the business world and part of the establishment welcomed a renewed pro-business Labour Party; on the other hand, Blair raised "alarmed rumblings on the hard left" (Marr, 1994a: 19), because Blair sympathised with the stakeholder society and the middle classes, and projected "the image of a closet conservative—'Tory Blair,' as the left has tagged him" (Marr, 1995b: 22). Eventually, Blair's modernisation found the opposition of the unions and the left-wing branch of Labour backbenchers (Grice and Prescott, 1996: 1; Linton and White, 1995: 1).

In 1995 Marr wrote an article in *The New Republic* entitled "Vanity Blair." Here the author reviewed the new leader's biography in order to scan his conservative antecedents and justify the potential turn to the right of the new party. Blair's accent, his look, the fact that his father was a conservative lawyer, his education at Fettes (the Scottish Eton) and Oxford, and his traditional morality made him the perfect conservative leader: "If he looks and sounds like a member of the ruling class that's because he is" (Marr, 1995b: 22). Blair's removal of Clause IV of the party constitution became a radical reform that the left strongly criticised (Clement, 1995: 8); although many other leaders of the party had long-before suggested it, no one endeavoured to take this a step further and face the subsequent controversy. He seemed a radical in the party, but what did he stand for? Marr pointed out that behind his conservative window dressing, Blair still defended the dogmas and social structures that his party had so long embraced. On top of that, he also seemed a radical within the left: promises on Scottish devolution, the abolition of hereditary peers in the House of Lords, the introduction of a British Bill of Rights, and a referendum on the voting system were also radical centre-of-left ambitions (Marr, 1995b: 25). All together, "the project" seemed the "magic elixir" that pleased both the left and right of the country (Jenkins, 1994: 16).

This contradiction for some, consensus for others, of conservatism and social democracy was also interpreted with ambiguity. What did Blair stand for? "Try to sum up what new Labour stand for, in a sentence. You can't. Tony Blair's politics, at once conservative and radical, pragmatic in purpose yet moral in tone, defy easy summation" (Marr, 1996a: 13). New Labour's mixture of left- and right-wing reforms disoriented many on the left and on the right. For Marr, Labour's modernisation seemed part of a process that aimed to please both sides and thus win supporters, as well as a part of the

maturing political development that was the only means to find a new ideological path: "New Labour's politics is confusing because it is still developing and learning, borrowing and stealing. It does not obey the laws of the old politics of left and right; it is happy to take from both" (13). In those early years, Blair was most characterised by the elusiveness (whether this might be a sign of strength or weakness) that initiated a vivid controversy among those who debated the legacy of political ideologies. What did Blair symbolise in the context of contemporary politics? The politician had already mentioned that the era of big ideologies had come to an end. Blair's views on traditional morality, family, law and order, neoliberal macro-economics, control on public spending and inflation simply made him a conservative: "It isn't surprising that some people, from the Tory right to the Labour left, have simply concluded that if Blair so often speaks like a conservative, looks like a conservative and argues like a conservative, then that is what he is" (13). This contradictory attitude triggered suspicion and preoccupation: "If he isn't one thing, he must be the other" (13).

However, the belief that Blair was turning his party to the right continued. In 1996, Marr published another article where he stated that "Labour is now positioning itself as the pragmatic party of government" (Marr, 1996b: 15), meaning that Blair was detaching New Labour from its Old Labour roots. Jenkins similarly claimed that Blair "has been tough on old Labour, and tough on the causes of old Labour" (Jenkins, 1996: 1), which proved more evident that Blair's New Labour would stop being socialist and union-linked:

> Blair himself uses the language of rebirth, youth and newness, but his policies emphasise continuity. The Thatcher union laws will stay; the moderate pro-Europeanism of the post-war period will be sustained; the state's share of national wealth will remain broadly the same; the Nineties anti-progressive backlash in education and law and order will be keenly pursued. (Marr, 1996b: 15)

It was therefore commonly believed that the Thatcherite legacy would continue under Blair. The confirmation that the conservative approach to economics had come to stay was widely spread, and something that any governing party had to accept: "The rise of the private lobbyists, party funding rows and the silent power of company-influenced quangos are examples of how the spread of power in the economy affects mainstream politics" (15). For Marr, globalisation and the hegemony of the markets

were undermining democracy and the power of those who even dared to transform it (Bogdanor, 1995: 6). Nonetheless, even despite the apparent perpetuation of New Labour's conservatism, for some critics Blair was still the new politician that Britain needed, as Marr himself admitted: "This country needs a new leadership with more openness and generosity. We need a real fresh start" (Marr, 1997a: 18). Other critics, such as Jenkins, were quite ironic with regards to this halo of modernity and innovation: would Britain be different if the Tories were in power? (Jenkins, 1998: 18). Jenkins's sarcasm critically exposed Blair's fake modernisation; perhaps it was so for Labour, but not for the country: "Britain is so much more refreshed, so revitalised, so new. It has a spring in its step, a self-confidence. New Britannia is hot, and cool" (18). Jenkins regarded Blair's "Cool Britannia" as all about "images, about smiles and about soothing words" (18) that proffered efficiency instead of ideology. Despite all efforts to render an aura of modernisation, for many, New Labour still looked old wine in new bottles. In terms of economic policies, taxes, social services, pensions and privatisations Labour and Tory politics were identical (18).

Regardless Marr and Jenkins's criticism of the Blair project, they were intellectuals who embraced a change of government and wished Blair well (Jenkins, 1997: 20). Marr's vision of Britain as a "hemmed-in nation," politically and culturally "eroded" (Bogdanor, 1995: 6) reasserted the necessity to give Labour a chance: yes, it was dressed up in conservative clothes, but progressive intelligentsia pleaded for a new government with excitement and hope. Despite his criticism of the New Labourite Renaissance, Marr also contributed to praise its achievements: in those early years of the emerging party, he admired Blair's determination and straightforwardness, thought that the leader was frank and brave in his reforms (Marr, 1997b: 13), revered Blair's ability to recover the Labourites' trust after a long period of hopeless electoral defeats, and supported the leader's progressive vision to attract the middle classes and make of himself a renewed and electable candidate (Marr, 1998: 28). Later in his career, Marr was accused of being too pro-Labour, thus gaining a controversial reputation among intellectuals for not being precisely a systematic counter-power critic (Pilger, 2010).[62]

[62] Between 2000 and 2005 Andrew Marr was the BBC's political editor, precisely during the Iraq war and the much-commented Hutton Inquiry in 2003, when the BBC denounced that the government had manipulated the war dossier to justify the invasion. Although this event confronted the BBC to the government, many critics pointed out that the corporation had been too "sympathetic to the government's case" (Pilger, 2010). Journalist John Pilger claimed that Blair enjoyed certain protectionism by the media,

However, it is necessary to analyse the figure of Andrew Marr as an active and dynamic intellectual who was often considered a committed critic eager to disturb those in government by pointing at their inconsistencies. As argued above, many accused Marr of being too close to Labour, thus representing part of the establishment he precisely confronted (McCann, 2000: 2). Still and all, it is inevitable to include Marr in the group of those intellectuals who contributed to the analysis of Blairism from its beginnings. Blair's assets and pitfalls as a nascent leader caused enthusiasm in some, but also suspicion and alarm in others, and Marr's role in this intellectual debate highlighted Blair's feats and defeats. For that reason, Marr has been both attacked and praised by his contemporaries; yet, they all seem to agree that Marr's influence on British politics was crucial, and his active criticism helped deconstruct Blair's project. As Elizabeth Grice brings to the fore in her assessment of the writer: "He has made a good living out of seeing through the pantomime of politics, not because it is fun but because he is evangelical about the need for better politics and better politicians" (Grice, 2007). Likewise, writer and columnist Paul Vallely has celebrated that Marr "has been an acclaimed reporter, an insightful columnist, and eccentric editor and authoritative and amusing political analyst" (Vallely, 2005).

Thanks to Marr's vision and critique of Blairism in his 1994—1997 columns, we have observed the emergent construction of Blair's contradictory ideology, which, under the façade of the social democratic tradition, allegedly shared the preceding conservative dogma. Similarly, political theorist **Alex Callinicos**, well known for his criticism of the Third Way and his books deconstructing this theory—*Equality* (2000) and *Against the Third Way: An Anti-Capitalist Critique* (2001), early criticised Blair's developing project. In 1996, Callinicos published an article entitled "Betrayal and Discontent: Labour under Blair," in which the analyst examined Labour's new ideology as shown in Blair's modernisation process, which eventually disguised the leader's early conservatism. In the essay, Callinicos both traced and criticised Blair's move to the right. As has been illustrated, many voices were concordant with this view, which, according to the author, was a common simple affirmation that held some truth. In this

the BBC in particular: "Blair was embraced by the new BBC corporate class, which regards itself as meritorious and non-ideological" (2010). Besides, he emphasised that Marr had turned into a leading accomplice in this special relationship that existed between the government and the media: "Few did more to enunciate Blair's 'vision' than Andrew Marr, then a leading newspaper journalist and today the BBC's ubiquitous voice of middle-class Britain" (2010).

respect, Callinicos spoke of the reasons why Blair was criticised by the left: on the one hand, the author identified the abolition of Clause IV of the party constitution as one of those reasons; on the other, he disapproved the announcement of prospective measures like the suppression of social benefits, the control of inflation through the control of public spending, the commitment to increasing flexibility in the markets, the strengthening of family values, a sturdy law and order approach, and restrictions on tax rising, pensions, and rights for workers (Callinicos, 1996). For Callinicos, "the effect of these policy shifts was, on issue after issue, to diminish the difference between Tory government and Labour opposition to the infinitesimally small" (1996). The growing views that Blair's project was a mere continuation of Thatcherism, and his illogical combination of left- and right-wing policies was consequently brought forward by the author: "Indeed, on some issues, Blair's team took positions which allowed some Tories to posture as standing to their left" (1996).

In his article, the author continued his attack on Blairism as a conservative force by examining the stakeholder economy in depth and affirming that Blair's modernisation did help promote and expand the pro-business economy. Callinicos suggested that Blairism had begun to represent the end of the state economy within the tradition of the Labour Party: "First, and negatively, there is the definitive abandonment of the belief—central to Keynesian social democracy—that the nation state can manage and regulate capitalism so as to avoid significant market fluctuations" (1996). For Callinicos, power had stopped lying in parliament to be headed by the financial markets that conditioned governments' decisions, and this eternal pattern of Labour's subordination to the capitalist moguls was what eventually frustrated the expectations of Labour supporters (Nightingale, 1996: 376). Blair's defence of business and the acceptance of globalisation—as an unchangeable reality that had to be faced—was masqueraded, according to the author, by using a social-led discourse, the social market economy in which the generated wealth would be spent on social services. Such is the essence of the Third Way philosophy—heavily criticised by Callinicos—, which defended capitalism as a means to accomplish social justice. Janet Newman—one of many critics who suggest that the Third Way detaches itself from the social democratic tradition—stated: "The image of a Third Way was used to mark out Labour's departure from the politics of the social democratic state, signifying a reconfiguration of relationships between economy and state, public and private, government and people"

(Newman, Janet 2001: 40). This combination of solidarity and globalisation seemed to be, for Callinicos, an inconsistent conclusion: the author highlighted the contradiction of the Third Way and the nature of the Blairite reforms by emphasising that "Tony Blair, Peter Mandelson, and their followers […] have opted for what looks suspiciously like the bad old Anglo-American free enterprise model championed by Thatcher and Reagan" (Callinicos, 1996). As reported by Erik Olin Wright and Harry Brighouse, Callinicos defined the Third Way as "a smokescreen for continuing the inegalitarian policies of neoliberalism" (Wright and Brighouse, 2002: 204). These writers pointed out that Callinicos' criticism of New Labour sprang from Blair's disappointing approach to public benefits and other macroeconomic measures that increased inequality in Britain. In this sense, Wright and Brighouse agreed with Callinicos in pointing at New Labour's "shift to the right" (204); even though the Third Way entailed an escape from historically failing left- and right-wing policies, it also aimed to reproduce "the best of both traditions," thus embodying the always modernising tradition of social democracy that ultimately allows conservative instincts to be integrated in centre-left parties (Callinicos, 2001: 1).

Callinicos, who has been acknowledged as the voice of old egalitarianism and classical Marxism (Gray, 2001: 3; Blackledge, 2012: 155), considered Blair's Third Way an ideological fiasco only utilised as a means to validate his project with an intellectual background. For Callinicos, such ideology was slippery and vague, and it was the attempt by the Blair government to recognise that the hegemony of neoliberalism was very much alive when, for instance, Gordon Brown stated that Labour "was the party of enterprise" (in Callinicos, 2001: 7-8). On the one hand, Callinicos wanted to underline that Labour lacked an ideology—or a categorical ideology; and on the other, that Labour's conservative modernisation lay underneath the surface. Blair's acceptance of globalisation and the fact that the free market hindered the government's decisions "reflects the neo-conservative dimension of Third Way thinking" (16), which is "'the same old story' of right-wing Labour politics" (Wetherly, 2004: 183). The economic conservatism of New Labour was evidenced when many criticised the government's choice of maintaining the Thatcherite spending budget for the first two years of Labour in Number 10, not to mention the provided independence of the Bank of England that could now control interest rates. For Callinicos, it was clear that New Labour was the party of business and the free market, instead of being faithful to the state control economy. In this sense, Paul Wetherly affirmed that the Third Way

represented a betrayal of social democracy: "The 'Third Way' may be seen as a degeneration rather than a renewal of social democracy" (183).

Therefore, Callinicos has been a major figure of dissent that opposed the mainstream ideological current established by Giddens and Blair in Britain, and he has persistently criticised the economic approach of New Labour and the social reforms that were oriented towards a settlement of neo-conservative politics (Wayne, 2004: 144). Callinicos denounced New Labour for being too conservative on education, economy, and social values: "The Blair government is, for example, transferring the management of state schools and the provision of other educational services to private companies" (Callinicos, 2001: 107). Furthermore, he also pointed out that it had precisely been a Labour government that pressed the EU for more flexible market policies (107). Callinicos lamented Blair's conservative approach to law and order, traditional values, and his particular idea of "community" and "equality of opportunities" (Martell, 2001: 398, 399), all of which would eventually damage real social egalitarianism: "British society became far more polarized between rich and poor than it had been for half a century" (Callinicos, 2001: 50).

Finally, Callinicos's categorical attack on New Labour has raised, to a certain extent, some criticism within the left. Some argued that Callinicos did not offer a solid alternative to the system he was criticising; despite his insistence on the need for socialism to reinvent itself, his ideas seem to be "undeveloped" (Martell, 2001: 400). However, and despite Callinicos's weaknesses in his theoretical deconstruction of the Third Way, he could be seen as one of the main oppositional figures that, in the field of theoretical analysis of contemporary ideology, criticised Blair's power and the new radical direction his party had taken. Callinicos's later books, that were published at the turn of the twenty-first century and analyse and attack New Labour's Third Way, show his coherent and permanent commitment to "revolutionary socialism" with the aim to achieve a "radical egalitarian project" (Wright and Brighouse, 2002: 207). This made of him a consistent dissident voice among intellectuals who attacked Blair's ideological approach, namely the Third Way.

In summation, intellectuals during the pre-1997 election years need to be considered in historical retrospection. In the 1990s, even before the Blair project existed, left-wing theorists such as Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques had participated in the revisionist debate of Labour by emphasising the urgency to reformulate the party's

future strategy and its ideological adaptation to modern times. Thus, the rise of Blair as leader of the opposition in 1994 and his consequent candidature for the 1997 general election was closely followed by the media, political analysts and journalists who reported Blair's meticulous modernisation process that made Labour electable. Alex Callinicos, Andrew Marr and Simon Jenkins were among those media figures and experts who witnessed Blair's political and sociological triumph by winning the support of certain conservative spheres in business, broadcast communications and the middle classes. These authors were on the spearfront of intellectual opposition by disclosing the politician's weaknesses, inconsistencies and his too evident indulgence with Thatcher's politics. Despite being accused of not affording real solutions and alternatives to the challenges of the left, they played an important role as systematic oppositional intellectuals when counteracting the theoretical rationale of Blair's Third Way, providing insistent criticism, and deconstructing the Blairite discourse in journals and newspapers; that is to say, by responding to the established/erudite knowledge (Foucault, 1980: 83) of Blair's ideological foundations with a counter-hegemonic theory that revealed Blair's contradictions and his apparent ideological hypocrisy. Moreover, and according to the conceptualisation of the oppositional intellectual as is understood in this dissertation, some of the critics included in this section have precisely been criticised for their abandonment of the socialist dogmas and their consequent support for a reformist cause within the Labour Party that admitted and adapted itself to the new capitalist and consumerist society. The attitude of modernising intellectuals such as Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques may be questioned if we consider, for instance, Gramsci's motto of the intellectual remaining faithful to the organic class he/she claims to represent; instead, these writers, with their initial statements in favour of the modernisation of the left, seemed to have abandoned their organic loyalty to the subaltern class in order to now defend an integration of the Labour Party in the dominant culture and the dominant economic system. However, and as we will see throughout this chapter, their critical attitude towards the left was also compensated with their critical views of the Blair project. They soon criticised Blair's modernisation as soon as it gave its back to the economically disadvantaged sectors of society and allied itself with the wealthy and the business class.

5.2 EARLY DISENCHANTMENT: *MARXISM TODAY* 1998

Shortly before being elected in 1997, New Labour was a party backed up by some optimistic intellectuals. Despite all kind of criticism, Blair seemed to be the lesser of two evils: many preferred a change of government, either because they were prone to vote for any alternative that would take the Tories out of power, or, as we have seen in the case of Stuart Hall, because they were prematurely envisaging the need of an ideological revisionism within Labour. When Tony Blair appeared as an electable candidate able to win the forthcoming election, he appeared to suit their expectations. In reciprocity with these intellectuals' support—some of them with alleged suspicion and jealousy—Blair was also willing to interact with the British intelligentsia and therefore legitimise his project with a theoretical sponsorship.

Back in 1996, the Prime Minister-to-be gathered a number of well-known thinkers to bring support for his cause. Journalist Patrick Wintour reported for *The Guardian*: "Tony Blair has held a private meeting with 80 intellectuals and businessmen, and urged them to spread new Labour's message" (Wintour, 1996: 8). Although the meeting took place on condition that their names would not be disclosed, *The Guardian* ensured that Stuart Hall, Anthony Barnett, John Gray, Geoff Mulgan, Andrew Adonis and Vernon Bogdanor were among the list. This showed Blair's efforts to associate himself with the British intelligentsia, in order to ground his project on a secure footing with reputed names among his supporters and, as Wintour asserts, to convince "thinkers that new Labour is not simply a media creature" (8).

John Lloyd, writing for *The Times* shortly after Blair's victory in 1997, emphasised the need for modern prime ministers to bring thinkers to their side. Harold Wilson, James Callaghan and Margaret Thatcher had done so before Blair, the latter hence seemed to be following the tradition of politicians surrounded by intellectuals: "Blair's circle put out many more feelers to the intelligentsia than any leader had done before. Indeed, it set up a structure to organise intellectuals into a new Labourist relationship" (Lloyd, 1997: 18). Accordingly, some of the thinkers that were most committed to the early New Labour project were the philosopher John Gray (an ideologically slippery intellectual who had been a disenchanted Thatcherite), political economist and right-of-centre social democrat Will Hutton, scholar and member of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) David Marquand, writer and scholar Geoff Mulgan (member of Tony Blair's policy unit), David Milliband (political analyst who became

head of Blair's policy unit), and Anthony Giddens, himself a Marxist who would later turn to more conservative spheres of thinking (Lloyd, 1997: 18; Lloyd, 1998: 11-12). Lloyd declared that among all supporters there was "no large intellectual figure who has wholly associated himself or herself with Blair and new Labour," with the exception of Giddens, whose "grand narrative, the Third Way" was the perfect theoretical rationale for New Labour's programme (Lloyd, 1998: 12). Moreover, there were some groups and organisations of intellectuals that additionally supported New Labour, people who decided to leave the spheres of political criticism and got involved in active participation alongside the government: they were, according to Lloyd, the Fabians, the think tank Demos, the Nexus network—scholars for New Labour—and the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) (11).[63] In this sense, Blair used the hegemonic strategy of bringing thinkers and intellectuals to his side in order to ultimately legitimise his project; these were intellectuals who, according to theorists such as Gramsci, Foucault and Said, belonged to the privileged spheres of power: they were the insiders, the conformist professionals who promoted the particular interests of the government that hired them (Said, 1996: xiii).

Despite some intellectuals' support for the New Labour project, Blair was soon criticised for lacking ideas, for being contradictory with the philosophy of the party, and for being more preoccupied with seducing the media through a modern image: in this sense, many remarked New Labour's *anti-intellectualism*. However, Lloyd contrarily suggested that New Labour was an intellectual party whose ideals had been consciously renewed by Blair and Brown, and that Labour was surrounded by committed intellectuals, not precisely left-wing, but right-wing thinkers (Lloyd, 1997: 18). Contemporary media consistently criticised these pro-Labour thinkers for their inability to provide new successful ideas, and for reproducing a neoliberal discourse that had suddenly become "uncontroversial, such as privatisation. Today Blair could give many of Sir Keith Joseph's ground-breaking early Thatcherite speeches of 1974 without

[63] The Fabian Society, a British socialist organisation that frames the intellectual debate on socialist revisionism, became one of the spaces for the development of the New Labour project, as the Fabians gradually acquired a significant influence on New Labour policies. The think tank Demos, a policy unit and research group whose aim is to come up with helpful ideas for the development of contemporary society, was established in 1993 and was chaired by new Labourite Geoff Mulgan and other intellectuals who had participated in *Marxism Today* (Martin Jacques). Although it was meant to be independent it quickly became New Labour's think tank (Harris, 2006: 16). Finally, Nexus was a network of centre-left scholars who used the magazine *Renewal* for developing new ideas through seminars and publications. It gave room for New Labour to develop his principles and ideas (Lloyd, 1998: 12; Lawson, 1996: 13).

turning a hair" as Kirsty Milne and Richard Cockett wrote for *The Sunday Times* (1997). It did not take too long before many public voices early suggested in diverse newspapers that New Labour would preserve the Tory (intellectual and ideological) influence (Milne and Cockett, 1997: 9).

From 1997, when Blair was elected, to 1998, important political developments took place in Britain. Some of them, such as the Good Friday Agreement and the Devolution to Scotland and Wales, were generally praised, yet many others were strongly criticised as the real nature of the new party was gradually disclosed. Contemporary analysts and intellectuals denounced some of his most controversial reforms: the welfare reform, whose aim was to reduce the role of the state and prioritise private enterprise in order to tackle social services; a neoliberal economic approach by means of which the government stuck to the conservative budget during the first two years in power, favouring wealth creation and tax reduction; and the noteworthy break-up with the trade unions, among others. This brief period of time in office already showed the U-turn in Labour policies, and these reforms were, perhaps, enough to raise the opposition of many of those intellectuals who, in the wake of Labour's ideological modernisation, had supported the Prime Minister for considering him the embodiment of the new social democracy. Among these thinkers, some committed theorists and critics canalised their dissatisfaction through the publication of a special issue of the already extinct political magazine *Marxism Today* (1998). The publication of this monographic issue after seven years of its disappearance showed the relevance of the intellectual reaction and criticism of the Prime Minister.

Marxism Today (MT) was the theoretical magazine of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) from 1978 to 1991.[64] It had been an outlet for intellectual debate on the revisionism of the left gaining particular importance during the Thatcherite 1980s under the editorship of Martin Jacques. Although the magazine was always open to integrate a wide range of political backgrounds—some conservative critics published in here, not to mention Blair himself—its collaborators mostly belonged to the

[64] The demise of the Soviet Union together with the fall of communism incited the folding of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in November 1991, heading to the consequent closure of its theoretical branch, the magazine *Marxism Today* the same year (Thorpe, 2010: 392). It is also believed that the economic recession of the early 1990s also contributed to the closure of many magazines, MT included (Henry, 1992: 6). Finally, Geoff Mulgan has also suggested that the reason why *Marxism Today* disappeared was because "simple" critique was no longer enough, and theorising needed a more realistic and pragmatic approach (Mulgan, 1998: 16).

Eurocommunist and anti-Stalinist wing of the CP, a centrist and moderate faction that defended a reform within the left considering its traditional limitations and the then success of Thatcherism (Callinicos, 1985). The magazine therefore "became a forum and a promotional vehicle for the re-thinking, not just the CPBG's, but also the Labour Party's, conventional wisdoms" (Pimlott, 2005: 179). In this respect, *Marxism Today* offered an opportunity for those thinkers who were disenchanted with the hard left, opening a space for reformism, and after an intensive decade of influential writing, it finally closed in 1991. However, and despite its demise, the magazine "is now being resurrected for a one-off last issue to pass judgment on Tony Blair's Government" (Rayner, 1998: 15). It was a special issue, a collection of essays by writers such as Angela McRobbie, Bhikhu Parekh, David Edgar, Will Hutton, Eric Hobsbawm, Geoff Mulgan and Stuart Hall, who, in their majority and with one exception—that of Mulgan—confronted early Blairism, and pictured the Prime Minister as "WRONG," quoting the magazine's cover title. The 1998 *Marxism Today* issue embodied the *j'accuse* standpoint that had labelled the oppositional function of intelligentsia in Britain during previous decades.

Although some of these thinkers timidly approached New Labour before its electoral triumph in 1997, they quickly retracted themselves and believed that "the Labour government has betrayed the socialist movement by putting image before substance" (Chittenden, 1998: 7). Some contemporary journalists remarked the inconsistency of the magazine's position in its historical course; such was the case of journalist Decca Aitkenhead who, writing for *The Guardian*, acknowledged the intrinsic contradiction of the writers of *Marxism Today* in the pre-Blair years and beyond. While the journal became the space for the left's self-criticism and the recognition that it had to progress in accordance with the times ("individualism, the market, private ownership and consumer culture"), these writers suddenly denounced the Labour government when precisely these claims became true under Blair (Aitkenhead, 1998: 22). For Aitkenhead, these were the leading figures that demanded a more radical change of direction in the left, and when this change took shape under Blair they quickly voiced their disaffection: "How does Marxism Today account for this contradiction?" she questioned (22). In her view, it seemed that these intellectuals surely felt guilty for having abandoned the left's path to socialism during the past decade, and they now recognised the real consequences when "it's too late" (22). Anyhow, *Marxism Today* and its writers represented a very clear example of the curve of disenchantment that

some intellectuals experienced with Blairism: they initially welcomed the renovation that the Prime Minister embraced, and realising that his reforms were not what they had suggested, or expected—Blair seemed to have gone too far—they reacted against the government and what they considered to be its inherited conservatism.

However, what did *Marxism Today* state in 1998? The reasons why Martin Jacques, former editor of the magazine, considered the idea of publishing a one-off issue on purpose of the first anniversary of Blair's election were to evaluate Blairism and to denounce that New Labour, with Blair's project and the Third Way ahead, had embraced the declining neoliberalism (Jacques, 1998a: 5). The magazine upheld the denunciation that Blairism constituted the continuation of Thatcherism, and its writers warned of the "pernicious effects of inequality" by reminding "Labour of its historic mission" (Freedland, 1998: 14). Journalist Anne McElvoy summarised MT's tenet by stating that "in the new revisionism, Mr Blair is her [Thatcher's] illegitimate son, a bastard of the onward march of history who has usurped the right of another to lead the left into government" (McElvoy, 1998: 3).

While the magazine grouped a collection of thinkers who opposed the result of early Blairism, not all of these collaborators were critical of Blair; the exception of Geoff Mulgan—who became part of Blair's policy unit—offered a positive vision of Blair's success. The rest of the MT writers were sharply critical of a wide range of themes, from globalisation, neoliberalism and inequality to national identity. In this respect, Bhikhu Parekh accused Blair of projecting an inexistent multicultural Britain and perpetuating a Thatcherite-kind of Britishness. On "Cool Britannia," Susanne Moore was very critical of a seemingly fake modernisation that actually veiled conservative values. On constitutional reform, Anthony Barnett denounced the contradictions of Blair's government and his "third way" reform in the House of Lords, reducing the number of hereditary peers but still reproducing an anachronistic system, this together with a mixture of centralising and decentralising measures (Devolution in Scotland and Wales, and centralisation of local authorities) that reflected the government's paradoxical and schizophrenic performance. Despite these concrete evaluations of the Blair project, the most important and significant essays are perhaps those by Martin Jacques, Eric Hobsbawm, Stuart Hall and Geoff Mulgan, all of whom

contributed with their writings to a more generic assessment of Blairism: "The Big Picture," which is the object of analysis in this dissertation. [65]

First of all, **Martin Jacques** exposed the fundamental implications of their criticism in his editorial. In order to provide certain coherence to the position of *Marxism Today* in 1998 with regards to their *New Times* thesis in 1989—in which MT writers blamed the hard left's inflexibility—Jacques reminded his readers that their standpoint was that the left "had lost touch with modernity" (Jacques, 1998b: 2). In this sense, Jacques argued that Blair understood that times had changed, but he was wrong by thinking that modernisation only spun around the free market and globalisation. For Jacques, Blair refused to rescue the forgotten egalitarianism, social justice and solidarity, thus missing the real *Marxism Today* position:

> Modernity—globalisation, the new individualism, post-Fordism et al—was not neutral, but could be inflected one way or the other, towards greater inequality, deregulation and increasing fragmentation, or towards greater equity, more social intervention and enhanced social solidarity. […]
>
> But the task facing Blair was, and is, not simply to embrace modernity, but to offer a different view of modernity and how it should be addressed, one which marked a fundamental break with the neo-liberal era. (2)

Here Jacques denounced the many-times commented belief that Blairism was a continuation of Thatcherism, and that the Prime Minister understood modernity by reproducing his predecessor's style instead of reversing it (2). Jacques position towards Blairism was clear, he alluded to Blair's excuse that globalisation and neoliberalism were inevitable: "New Labour did not herald the end of neo-liberalism: on the contrary, for the most part it acquiesced in its nostra because it believed—politically and intellectually—that nothing else was possible" (3). John Gray, in a later assessment of Blairism, also acknowledged that the Prime Minister had adopted the irreversible Thatcherite neoliberalism while being elusive with the social democratic discourse (Gray, 2004: 39). On the contrary, a more socialist interpretation of modernity is what *Marxism Today* demanded, and in view that Blairism turned out to be more of the Thatcher-Major politics, it triggered, according to Jacques, a generalised

[65] "The Big Picture" is how Martin Jacques entitled the first group of essays in the 1998 *Marxism Today* issue. The contributors provided a generic assessment of what they thought to be the effects of Blairism heretofore. This heading was ironically referring to what Blair had called his "big picture," all his ambitious reforms that formed the manifesto of his first tenure.

disenchantment among those intellectuals who expected something different in Blair's New Labour. Initially, the optimistic circumstances made them all believe that this time would be different, that this new leader would approach history with favourable wind, and in the end something different happened, Blair frustrated these intellectuals' expectations:

> When we were all so relieved to be rid of the Tories, when the energies of the people were released, when Blair was demonstrating his instinctive populist touch, when the economy was thriving, when the government faced no opposition, when it enjoyed more room to manoeuvre economically and politically than any government this century, we seemed to have entered a new era. But we were wrong. (Jacques, 1998b: 3)

Jacques's editorial anticipated the generalised perception of many writers that Blairism was causing early disenchantment in its followers (Grice, 1998: 9). These voices embodied the role of what Gramsci, Foucault and Said called public intellectuals when they openly attacked power, on this occasion, a Labour government that was never meant to be the natural party of government and that suddenly became the Labour Party of the establishment and of the private enterprise, the government that endorsed a corporatist conception of the state, the prevalence of image over substance, of social inequalities, traditional values, and the marketisation of national identity. In their majority, these *Marxism Today* 1998 writers expressed their disenchantment with Blair's project by scrutinising Blair's early weaknesses in his approach to contemporary politics. With their denunciations, these intellectuals exerted the political function of responding to Blair's discourse, thus debilitating and diminishing his power, which ultimately characterised them as counter-hegemonic voices reacting against Blair's acceptance of the so-powerful capitalism.

Eric Hobsbawm, the laureate British Marxist historian whose works have explored contemporary culture in terms of industrial and post-industrial capitalism, socialism, economic liberalism and labour movements, was a pillar of the magazine and another authoritative voice in its reformist debate. In conjunction with Martin Jacques and Stuart Hall, Hobsbawm was then considered an innovative and revolutionary pioneer for arguing, like his *Marxism Today* contemporaries, that society had changed and that the left had to be realistic in order to beat the Conservative Party in Parliament. He also predicted the need to question the role of the left in contemporary societies and

was eager to embrace the opening of the Old Left rigidity.[66] His early writings, claiming for the modernisation of Labour, dated back to 1978 even before Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, when, in his so-commented essay "The Forward March of Labour Halted?" he stated that the working class was predictably being diminished as a social force, and therefore, as a potential collective of voters that allowed to win elections (Hobsbawm, 1978). In this sense, Hobsbawm would forecast Blair's appeal of the British middle class in his 1997 electoral triumph. Also, his later essay "Labour's Lost Millions" (1983) continued his argument that Old Labour's refusal to face facts made the party lose supporters, thus presaging that Labour "would suddenly collapse" (Hobsbawm, 1983: 7).[67] By 1988, in his "No Sense of Mission," Hobsbawm warned of the need to "get rid of Thatcherism" by means of "re-thinking the Labour Party" since Labour seemed to lack any sense of direction (Hobsbawm, 1988: 14). With this trajectory, it is no surprise that Hobsbawm supported Neil Kinnock's modernising project in the 1980s and by extension Tony Blair's New Labour in the 1990s: in retrospect, Hobsbawm has been considered, together with other authors such as the already mentioned Stuart Hall, one of the intellectuals who gave birth to the theoretical gestation of the later Third Way that nurtured Blair's New Labour. According to Herbert Pimlott, "Hobsbawm's interventions can be seen as preparing the ground for Tony Blair, New Labour, and Anthony Giddens, the supposedly theoretical and academic inspiration for the heralded 'third way'" (Pimlott, 2005: 177). However, and despite Hobsbawm's vision of modernisation, he was widely known for being a thorough anti-capitalist left-wing thinker, a defender of the working class, the welfare state and he was very critical of the Reaganite and Thatcherite neoliberalism, which will be important to understand Hobsbawm's former attacks on New Labour.

In tune with the evolution of *Marxism Today*, Hobsbawm also seemed to be disappointed with Blairism. In spite of his modernising conviction, by 1998, one year after Blair entered Number 10, Hobsbawm became a strong critic of the so-called

[66] Eric Hobsbawm supported the reformist Kinnock revolution, that is, the beginning of the modernisation process that took place within the Labour Party in the 1980s: "Eric Hobsbawm's writings in *Marxism Today* have been of significance primarily in lending support to Neil Kinnock's strategy of steering Labour rightwards" (Callinicos, 1985). His contributions to the magazine *Marxism Today* and many other publications in newspapers made him one of those leading theorists and analysts of contemporary British politics that helped construct a new understanding of the left.

[67] Eric Hobsbawm determination to warn the Labour Party that the Thatcherite society of the 1980s was different and that the left had to face reality as it was, gave ground for the birth of what it was later called Hobsbawm's "Realistic Marxism" (Pimlott, 2005).

neoliberal approach of New Labour. He contributed to the MT special issue with an essay entitled "The Death of Neo-Liberalism," which continued with his previous criticism of contemporary politics. In his article, the author explained that despite the Asian crisis in the late 1990s—which proved to be, in his opinion, a response to the failing global neoliberal system—the New Labour government under Tony Blair ignored the signs of the neoliberal collapse and still advocated the free market as the only alternative.[68] Hobsbawm's criticism of New Labour resided in the government's belief that the uncontrolled *laissez-faire* economic system was superior to any other alternative, which reinforced the so-commented critique that Blairism was a mere continuation of Thatcherism: "Governments like Tony Blair's could be described as Thatcherism in trousers" (Hobsbawm, 1998: 4). In order to justify his appreciations, Hobsbawm exposed the reasons why he believed Blair had reproduced his predecessor's economic approach: first of all, Blair did not intend to reverse Thatcher's reforms—such as the gradual process of deindustrialisation or the reforms in the welfare state—and he actually developed the free market model of deregulation and privatisation, "that is to say an economy with minimal interference by states or other institutions" (5). Moreover, Blair seemed to defend his "attachment to the free market" because, as Thatcher had exposed before him, it was inevitable (5).

In short, the theorist denounced what he called Blair's "excuses" for not implementing other alternatives. As the author maintains: "But 'we don't want to do this' should not be disguised as 'there is nothing we can do about it'. There is and it must be done" (6). In this respect, Gray clarified that New Labour had carried out timid redistributive reforms to be more inclusive with the poor, but made clear that "market mechanisms have continued to be imposed on health, education and other public services" (Gray, 2004: 39). Gray also claimed that Blair was applying the corporatist style that had dominated the previous conservative era in social institutions and had taken privatisations "beyond anything that Thatcher had envisaged" (43). For Gray, New Labour was not only the successor of Thatcherism, but also its continuation (39). Likewise, other authors pointed out once again New Labour's affair with the private

[68] The Asian Financial crisis started in Thailand in 1997 and quickly spread around other surrounding Southeast Asian countries. The unsustainable public debt, and the instability in the exchange rate mechanisms provoked a devaluation of the local currencies that took some of these countries (such as Indonesia) to bankruptcy. Panic was generalised and the West feared that this crisis would become a world financial crisis, showing, this way, the risks of globalisation and uncontrolled free market (see Sharma, 2003).

enterprise. Political economist and expert in health policy Calum Paton analysed the legacy of Blair's model in the public services; he stated that New Labour did implement a privatising approach by reproducing what it was called the conservative Private Finance Initiative (PFI), later rebranded Public Private Partnerships (PPP) by New Labour, hence an evident sign that New Labour was inspired by the conservative marketisation of public services (Paton, 2008: 19).

For Hobsbawm, as expressed in his MT essay, Blair could not wash his hands off the negative consequences of the neoliberal model. What he most criticised was New Labour's reluctance "to control and regulate the operations of a capitalist market economy" and its unwillingness "to distribute the enormous wealth generated and accumulated by our society" that ultimately aimed to achieve fairer societies (Hobsbawm, 1998: 7). According to Hobsbawm, "it is time for the Labour government to remember that its major objective is not national wealth but welfare and social fairness" (7). The author therefore stood for a social democratic model that respected an egalitarian redistribution of wealth, thus attacking neoliberalism as the source of social inequalities and the excuse the government used not to explore other fairer alternatives.

Stuart Hall, together with Jacques and Hobsbawm, also emerged as one of the prime movers of the theoretical revisionism of the left. As we have previously seen with his early writings, Hall dictated that a new political vision was necessary to provide social justice and equality within the new contemporary reality that Thatcherism had shown. His role in *New Times* positioned him as an anti-hegemonic figure not only against the conservative government, but also against the established moral conviction of the hard left of his own party. Hall denounced that the left needed different alternatives, reason why he boosted, along with other committed intellectuals, a modernisation in the theoretical approach to left-wing contemporary politics. In consequence, Hall approved the political branch of this transformation, that of Neil Kinnock as leader of Labour in the 1980s (Callinicos, 1985). Later, in the early 1990s, Hall also supported the candidate who would be the new leader of the opposition, Tony Blair, whom he praised for having successfully converted the Labour Party in an electable entity able to win the coming election; modernisation under Blair was, according to Hall, an admirable achievement (Hall, 1995: 23). The author also admitted that although he, and other writers of *Marxism Today*, welcomed the rise of the new leader with optimism, his early mistrust made him cautious. Concerning the ideological background that sustained New Labour reforms, Blair seemed to abandon the "public

philosophy" and seemed to have learned from the lessons of Thatcherism; Blair was hence described as "deeply conservative," was he "Son of Margaret?" (23).

In 1998, Hall joined the *Marxism Today* group of disenchanted intellectuals who considered that their calls on modernisation during the previous decade had been misunderstood by the Prime Minister. In his essay entitled "The Great Moving Nowhere Show,"[69] Hall examined Blairism and argued that the Prime Minister's conservatism, his moralising traditional values (i.e. the family), his prioritisation of business, his reluctance to reverse the effects of the free market, and the growing inequalities, made of Blair, in "the big picture," Thatcher's heir.

The 1997 election seemed to be a good opportunity for Labour to implement the changes the left had yearned for after a long period of conservatism, so many in the *Marxism Today* group welcomed the Blair effect with optimism and hope. Hall admitted that "many of us responded to his election as leader of the Labour party with the same optimism we greeted the nomination of Bill Clinton" (Hall, 1998: 13). Nevertheless, for Hall, Blairism was finally understood as "a great missed opportunity" (9), because many expectations were put on a new leader who had initially fitted the discourse of modernity that they claimed, but who had clearly abandoned the path of social democracy that these writers also represented. The overwhelming reality, in these intellectuals' perspective, that Blairism was the continuation of Thatcherism was "all too obvious" (9). Hall wondered whether Tony Blair was certainly the radical alternative they had been expecting, and questioned if Blair really embodied the new modernity, or if he was simply learning from his predecessor: "Is it a series of pragmatic adjustments and adaptive moves to essentially Thatcherite terrain? […] Where is New Labour really going? Does Mr Blair have a political project?" (9). For Hall, Blair did have a project and did have a strategy, he insisted that the egocentric discourse that was born out of the "New Labour" slogan had constructed an "hegemonic" image of the party (9). New Labour had become "the natural party of government," whose aim was to assimilate the British people and the British culture with the new party, and therefore infuse the country with a New Labourite spirit that inspired confidence and seduced the masses, perhaps, as Thatcherism had previously done.

[69] Stuart Hall's essay "The Great Moving Nowhere Show" parallels his earlier essay "The Great Moving Right Show" (1979) where he examines the rise of the radical New Right, a New Right that eventually nurtured Thatcherism in Britain.

In this respect, Blairism was also a populist project. The hegemonic construction of the image of the party revealed Blair's achievement of what Foucault named *Power/Knowledge* (Foucault, 1980), that is to say, invisible and subtle relations of power that are unconsciously established among all the members of a society and that help distinguish what is right and wrong, something that is ultimately achieved by the control of the mechanisms of distribution of the established values, beliefs and truths. Some critics have thus acknowledged the moralist atmosphere that surrounded Blair's convictions, which were, in turn, distributed by the influential role of the media: "For Blair, the mass media have served as a technology of social engineering through which public perceptions [developed to aide re-election] can be actively shaped" (Gray, 2004: 45). This hegemonic project had, for some, certain Thatcherite reminiscences.

In his MT essay, Hall firstly aimed to provide some coherence to the *New Times* thesis exposed a decade before. As contradictory as the *Marxism Today* group may have seemed in their *New Times* (1989) and *Marxism Today* (1998) positions, Hall took great pains in clarifying their view by stating that late sociological changes actually required a compromise between "individualism" and "collectivism," between the "public good" and the "free markets" (Hall, 1998: 10). The *New Times* proposal inevitably resembled Blair's revisionism, however, according to Owen Worth, what these writers really claimed for was a modernisation that transformed the market driven economy, and not a commitment to developing it (Worth, 2007: 97). For Hall, the kind of Third Way that Blair advocated, understood as "the middle course on every question between all the existing extremes" (Hall, 1998: 10), was not really what the MT stood for. According to the critic, Blair's Third Way was not a middle ground to tackle problems, but a way to avoid them, an evanescent approach not to commit oneself to a "clear political profile" (10). The inclusive programme of the Third Way revealed, for Hall, "indecisions and ambiguous formulations" (10), it was, in essence, a contradictory discourse. Other detractors of the Third Way coincided with Hall in pointing at this inherent contradiction: the Third Way offered some confusion when simultaneously defending the principles of equality and community and the conservative ideals of the free market and private enterprise, becoming therefore a simple marketing tool of political modernisation (Leggett, 2005: 3). It was again an electoral strategy aimed to attract more conservative spheres of voters, and a mere stylisation of the party to make it electable (Gamble, 2005: 431; Driver and Martell, 2006: 16).

Secondly, Hall's main criticism focused on different aspects of Blair's economic model. The author made a straightforward attack against Blair's defence of the free market, which entailed the consequent perpetuation of social inequalities. For Hall, the Prime Minister had ironically strengthened the responsibilities of individuals, but guaranteed a greater flexibility for companies and business that, on the basis of their natural generosity, were supposedly willing to share their wealth with their staff (Hall, 1998: 10). New Labour's reinterpretation of the social democratic notion of "redistribution" was oriented towards a new conception of the duties of the individual. Some authors have argued that the government's intention was to expand the belief that individual work was not oriented towards an equal distribution of wealth; on the contrary, individual work was interpreted as a communitarian duty to create wealth for the very sake of creating wealth (Coates, 2000a: 123). Hall denounced that "the 'Third Way' did observe accelerating social inequality but refused to acknowledge that there might be structural interests preventing our achieving a more equitable distribution of wealth and life-changes" (Hall, 1998: 10). In other words, the disastrous consequences of the free market morally required that the government controlled the interests of the economic elite so as to ultimately guarantee the prevalence of the egalitarian redistribution of wealth.

Moreover, as regards globalisation, Hall denounced New Labour's reluctance to face the incontrollable effects of the market: "New Labour does deal with globalisation as if it is a self-regulating and implacable Force of Nature" (Hall, 1998: 11). Blair argued that the effects of globalisation were beyond the control of the states, which explained his belief that society had to adapt to the new global economic current, instead of reversing its consequences: "New Labour appears to have been seduced by the neo-liberal gospel that 'the global market' is an automatic and self-instituting principle requiring no particular social, cultural, political or institutional framework" (11). As author Chris Rojek affirms, the Blair government assumed the irrevocable standardisation of globalisation: "Hall's attack on New Labour (1998) accuses the Blair government of treating globalization as a *fait accompli*" (Rojek, 2003: 29). The government did not appear to be responsible for the "active management of economy," and it would be the world markets that actually obliged countries to implement particular measures such as low taxation and privatisations, and to standardise values

such as individualism, risk-taking, competitiveness and entrepreneurship (Hall, 1998: 11).

David Held also supported this point in his analysis of New Labour's response to globalisation. According to Held, globalisation and the free market mechanisms are man-made products, and, as such, they can be controlled. The critic objected to Blair's suggestion that globalisation is an "inexorable force to which citizens and national institutions must adapt" (Held, 1998: 24). Although the government had timidly co-ordinated the global management of economy, its attempts were clearly insufficient and "consistent with the neo-liberal hyperglobalist position" (27). All things considered, these intellectuals claimed that Blair was an evident heir of Thatcherism, even though

> He is in some ways a modern man, at ease with some of the changes which now characterise our world. But, politically, he is essentially a post-Thatcherite figure, in the sense that the experience of Thatcherism was, it seems, his shaping and formative political experience. (Hall, 1998: 14)

As we have seen, Hall's criticism and his proposals were coherent with his left-wing background when he denounced Blair's apology for flexibility in business and the free market; on the contrary, Hall defended the imperative control of the state economy:

> Hall's identification with New Left preconceptions is also evident in his criticism of New Labour which mobilizes traditional socialist demands for more public investment, progressive taxation, more state intervention in the market and an end to the public/private divide in the provision of health and education. (Rojek, 2003: 31)

Rojek consequently assumes that Hall's socialism could be defined as of an "old-fashioned kind, based in the notion of the Keynesian state" (45) in which the role of the state was precisely to secure the egalitarianism that had receded during Blair's time in office. For Hall, "the state is necessarily the central institution in the management and leadership of society and, as such, constitutes the real lever to socialist transformation" (132). Therefore, thanks to Hall's intervention in the MT special issue of 1998, we can observe that his nature of dissident thinker prevails to some extent. Hall reveals his essence as an anti-hegemonic intellectual on the basis that his theory of state intervention confronts Blair's defence of the economic power, which fosters the prototypical counter-power attitude, and the anti-authority struggle of the intellectual who deconstructs the established/hegemonic neoliberal discourse—Blair's Third

Way—and denounces the damaging effects of capitalism on the subaltern/subjugated groups (Gramsci, 1971: 52; Foucault, 1980: 82). Conversely, some voices have pointed out that Hall's criticism is often incoherent and imprecise, which seems to go in parallel with the position of *Marxism Today* as a whole. For Rojek, although Hall's criticism on neoliberalism is still necessary, he does not actually produce real alternatives: "The critique of capitalism is obviously still relevant, but there is a depressing tendency to fail to go beyond the level of critique to social, economic and cultural reconstruction" (Rojek, 2003: 31). Nevertheless, and despite Rojek's assessment of Hall's outmoded socialism and his lack of solutions, he agrees that "He [Hall] is quite right to suspect that Blair and New Labour share many of Margaret Thatcher's gut instincts" (155).

Likewise, critics such as Geoff Mulgan and Angela McRobbie have also been critical of Hall either for not offering real solutions in his analyses, or for being contradictory and "hypocritical" when comparing his two theses: the *New Times* manifesto in 1989, and his *Marxism Today* position in 1998 (Steel, 1998: 23). Some years later, in an interview by Helen Davis (2004), Hall had the opportunity to defend himself from this criticism. On the one hand, Hall was willing to explain the apparent contradiction that seemed to exist between his defence of a more flexible Marxism, and his later criticism of New Labour in the face of Blair's early reforms. Hall admitted that their *New Times* thesis might not have been specific enough, which could have led to a generalised confusion. He explained that the *New Times* writers' intention was never to generate what later became the New Labour discourse, or at least not directly. The direction it took under Blair's leadership seemed to be independent from the suggestions of those theorists who acknowledged an imminent need of change within the left. As Hall stated, "I don't think we ever subscribed to New Labour. Once New Labour sufficiently articulated itself as a new formation, certainly Martin [Jacques] and I opposed to it" (in Davis, 2004: 202). With regards to this, Jacques agreed that "Marxism Today, […] never embraced New Labour" (Jacques, 2013: 45).

Although it seems evident that *Marxism Today* and Stuart Hall's position led to confusion, some authors have pointed out that it is necessary to understand Hall's post-Fordist interpretation of Marxism, as he himself explained in his article "Marxism without Guarantees" (1986), in order to ultimately understand his ideological and

theoretical polysemy.[70] For Hall, the political renewal of the left had to be flexible, as socialism needed flexibility and tolerance to find new ways of facing contemporaneity; whereas it was necessary to be open to social and political change, there was also a need of being critical of those alternatives that may arise in the name of modernisation but which might disguise a neoliberal programme. In this respect, when *New Times* and Stuart Hall advocated for a reformist necessity within the left and later reacted against Blairism, Hall was, for some critics, contradictory and inconsistent, yet for others he was being coherent with his philosophy, as he was open to new left-wing projects but also critical of those that accepted pure capitalism:

> One should also bear in mind potential reform projects such as those associated with what we now define as the 'third way' and (perhaps more importantly) be less naïve—or perhaps more critical—in analysing political 'inventions' that add up to nothing more than (neo)liberal orthodoxy. (Worth, 2007: 101-102)

Hall's argument demonstrates his Gramscian influence when he defends that alternative paths are possible as long as they exert an opposition to the hegemonic discourse and contemplate social change; that is to say, any "counter-hegemonic social project" must address transformation of society instead of "merely residing within its sway" (101). For Hall, the effects of Thatcherism forced the left to re-think its position and find new flexible channels of modernisation; but he also warned of the need to be critical about any rising proposal. However, as Owen Worth concluded in his analysis of Hall's Marxism, despite the thinker's repudiation of Blair's project, *New Times* and *Marxism Today* will inevitably be associated and intimately attached to New Labour (105).

On the other hand, and back to Davis's interview in which Hall tried to explain himself in face of adverse criticism, the author also responded to Geoff Mulgan's affirmation that Hall did not offer real alternatives to the system he was criticising. **Geoff Mulgan**'s contribution to *Marxism Today* in 1998 represents an exceptional support for the Labour government, exposing accordingly his clear confrontation with these nonconformist intellectuals. In his essay, Mulgan accuses Hobsbawm and Hall of

[70] Stuart Hall's "Marxism without Guarantees" (1986) stated that there was a need to be open with the different interpretations of Marxism, as well as with the moderate alternatives that may arise. Perhaps it is for that reason that *New Times* "would always be open to centralist and liberal interpretations," and would often be associated with the later outcome of Blair's New Labour and the Third Way (Worth, 2007: 102).

being very critical of the government and yet unable to offer a "credible alternative" (Mulgan, 1998: 15). When they condemn capitalism and New Labour's neoliberalism, "they appear, astonishingly, to have nothing to say: nothing about whether there really is an alternative to capitalism, nothing about how capitalism might be humanised" (15). For Mulgan, these intellectuals' reactions are empty of substance, and they do not offer pragmatic answers to the problems they identify: "Is there a serious critique here, or, behind the erudition and eloquence, are we being offered little more than a jumble of assertions and woolly logic?" (15).

Mulgan's attack calling for practical solutions, and for the urgent imperative of getting involved into live politics in order to change things guides Mulgan's arguments when he defends his own personal choice of working for the New Labour government at the policy unit. He emphasises the achievements of his government by pointing out that it has implemented more reforms than any other government in the past: the Devolution to Scotland and Wales, extra investment in health and education, and a new employment programme, all with the aim to justify the effects of real political commitment when it comes to improve society. What is particularly interesting in Mulgan's discussion is precisely his idea of active participation in government, because his attack on Hobsbawm and Hall does not stem from their opposition to the government itself, but from what Mulgan believes to be the authentic role of the public intellectual. He accuses these prestigious thinkers of being enclosed in their ivory tower, swaddled in safe philosophical theories that analyse from a distance a world they cannot change. In Mulgan's view, the contemporary intellectual is not actively involved in real politics as "councillors, activists, or school governors" (16), and he insists that "society is viewed as if from outside, without any sense of membership or responsibility" (16). For the writer, real intellectuals seem to be those who are not only participative with their arguments, but those who are participants of social change "within society not outside of it" (16). The uncommitted and passive image of the contemporary public intellectual that Mulgan exposes is contrasted, in his article, with former intellectuals such as Karl Marx or Walter Benjamin who advocated for an authentic change and commitment; for Mulgan, the unengaged attitude of the MT intellectuals shows a "remarkable depoliticisation of intellectual life that has taken place over the last few decades" (16).

In short, many different writers participated in the 1998 MT issue criticising different aspects of the Blair project. Hall and Hobsbawm helped with a generic view of the meanings of Blairism, and as Mulgan complained, they did not offer specific solutions to their criticism. Other authors of the 1998 MT issue did certainly contribute in their articles with a deep analysis of Blair's politics and provided concrete solutions to subsequent problems. David Held, Will Hutton and Gerald Holtham presented respective lists of suggestions (Held, 1998: 27; Hutton, 1998a: 37; Holtham, 1998: 29). However, it is important to react to Mulgan's criticism within the intellectual framework that structures this dissertation. It was Hall who defended himself acknowledging that his role as thinker is that of an "intellectual," meaning that his contribution to political analysis is by means of participating in the "intellectual struggle" (in Davis, 2004: 193). Thanks to his writings and his theorising he was able to contribute to "advance the cause," yet he was not an expert in public policy or economy (194).

What is then the role of these intellectuals? To respond to this question, it is indeed crucial to understand Hall and Hobsbawm's opposition to the Blair government as what they are, "intellectuals" who conform at a discursive level—perhaps not at an empirical one—the anti-hegemonic forces that denounced Blair's weaknesses. In this respect, these intellectuals can be understood as challenging figures who fit in the notion of the public thinker, the real intellectual who faces the political establishment and denounces what he/she thinks is the abuse of power or the lack of action in the face of injustice. They hence constitute the "intellectual resistance" (Sinfield, 1989: 2) that construct, through specific writings, a political conscience, and this is also political action.

On the one hand, following Gramsci's concept of the "organic intellectual," we can consider that these reactions try to contest the established power and its *status quo* through a committed narrative in order to arise awareness and achieve effective change. These writers' engaged contribution to reacting against the establishment is, for Gramsci, an "active participation" as "constructors," "organisers" and "permanent persuaders" of a different society (Gramsci, 1971: 9-10). It is important to point out that within the Gramscian philosophy and within its original historical context, these intellectuals had to lead organised proletarian movements in the battle to dismantle the ruling power, always by remaining faithful to their "organic interests" of the class they represented. In this respect, Hall, Hobsbawm and other MT 1998 writers did not

probably have this orthodox revolutionary ambition of reaching power through an organised movement, but they seemed to remain faithful—with their arguments against contemporary social inequalities—to the "organic interests" of the disadvantaged.

On the other hand, Foucault's concept of *Power/Knowledge* can also help clarify the position of these intellectuals. Foucault's interpretation of the role of the intellectual is again estimated as a way of social regulation (Foucault, 1980: 109), meaning that what he called the "subjugated knowledge" responds to the "dominant/established knowledge" by creating consciousness, that is to say, when the excluded discourses deconstruct the established truth by revealing other perspectives and other marginal stories. The ultimate aim of these nonconformist intellectuals is not understood in Marxist terms; for Foucault, there is not an explicit organised political movement to overthrow power on behalf of the real and absolute truth, but there should be space for other alternative truths to answer the erudite knowledge or the established power. This is also political activism, but seen from a more implicit and less revolutionary way. In the case of these *Marxism Today* intellectuals, there was no organised political movement to depose Blair's government, but an aim to debilitate its legitimised authority through a counter-narrative. There is therefore a need of an intellectual and discursive resistance in these voices, perhaps they do not always contribute with concrete political reforms—or at least some of them do not—but as Hobsbawm alleges: "If critique is no longer enough, it is more essential than ever" (Hobsbawm, 2002: 277).

Finally, it is Edward Said's interpretation of the representations of the intellectual utilised here to analyse the functionality of these thinkers. Said's concept of the intellectual also helps us understand the committed role of these *Marxism Today* writers who complained about the established power—and the policy makers and inside thinkers of the government—by denouncing with passion and motivation Blair's deceptions. In reference to Mulgan's argument that intellectuals' commitment is not real until they become active in government, it is necessary to mention Said's suggestion that it is the independence from power what actually makes these intellectuals autonomous, what makes them act from the margins, outside the establishment, and exert their moral authority as free thinkers—not attached to the government that hires them. According to Said—whose theory was in turn influenced by Gramsci's distinction between "traditional" and "organic intellectuals"—all those professionals, experts and consultants, "whose main role is to provide authority with their labor while gaining

great profit," are unable to be critical of their patrons and speak the truth to power (Said, 1996: xv). The real intellectual is, for Said, an outsider who works from the margins and who publicly denounces, with his or her voice or writings, the government's injustices against the weak. His/her interventions must be, in Said's opinion, free from the mainstream culture, and must "raise embarrassing questions" (11) by telling the truth in favour of the unrepresented. For Said, this political action is real active commitment whose aim is to "induce a change in the moral climate" (100). In this respect, Said advocates that "every intellectual whose metier is articulating and representing specific views, ideas, ideologies, logically aspires to making them work in a society" (110), that is to say, the intellectual, by speaking the truth, contributes to construct a new political conception of society. The writers in the 1998 MT issue complained about the growing inequalities in Britain as a consequence of Blair's approach to economy, such as the marketisation of social services, the acceptance of globalisation and neoliberalism, and the rendition to an uncontrolled *laissez-faire* model. These were the truths that these intellectuals were motivated to denounce publicly and independently of the political power.

This analysis aims to demonstrate how the *Marxism Today* writers, who exerted the function of dissident intellectuals, battled to shatter Blair's discourse and debilitate his hegemonic protection of global neoliberalism. Their early reaction in 1998, barely a year after Blair reached Downing Street, constitutes an initial example of the intellectual disenchantment among those thinkers who had timidly supported the rise of this young and modernising Prime Minister. Despite the fact that some of them actually praised Blair's early achievements, they seemed to agree that, in general terms, Blair had been too complaisant with the conservative economic legacy of Margaret Thatcher. However, some critics have argued that the overall assessment of Blair's macro-economic policies was evidently more positive than the previous conservative era, which, still today, endures a catastrophic reputation of poverty and abandonment of the public arena. Despite the left's deception with New Labour for its defence of an inevitable global free market, different analysts have provided studies that support favourable and unfavourable conclusions. Some state that public spending increased during the Blair years, and that schools and hospitals improved in standards (Wood, 2000: 202; Stephens, 2001: 187; Pattie, 2004: 21). Contrarily, Howard Glennerster has pointed out that Blair truly favoured the privatisation of public services and decreased public investment—many times considered proportionally inferior to the conservative spending (2005: 285;

2001: 399). On the whole, the real outcome of Blairism is still slippery, while some more optimistic experts warn that Blair's legacy, although disappointing for the left, was not as pessimistic as it was believed, others denounced Blair's undeniable shift to the right. The *Marxism Today* intellectuals exposed their perception that the Blair project was too conservative and that there were evidences to consider it "Thatcherism in trousers" (Hobsbawm, 1998: 4), and they complained about the disappointing performance of the New Labour government by condemning the risks that Blair's policies entailed. As previously analysed, *Marxism Today* fulfilled the role of counter-hegemonic dissent, and scarcely one year after Blair was in power, it illustrated the early disenchantment of these intellectuals with Blairism. As John Lloyd stated: "The honeymoon between Blair and the intelligentsia is certainly over" (1998:12).

5.3 INCREASING DISENCHANTMENT: BLAIR'S SECOND TERM (2001—2005)

From 1998, the year of the publication of the *Marxism Today* issue, to shortly before the 2001 general election, intellectual analysis focused, on the one hand, on the outcome of Blair's first tenure, and on the other hand, on the expectations of a prospective second victory of the Labour Party that would prolong the Blairite reformism. By this time, new highbrow figures, that had supported Blair's early modernisation, began to emerge as opponents of his government. The scholar David Moon, in an article published by Compass Pressure Group in 2007,[71] analysed how by the early 2000s the radical intelligentsia was disenchanted with the non-progressive politics of New Labour, and many thinkers who had previously supported the Blair project (David Marquand, Will Hutton, Neal Lawson, Polly Toynbee) then felt disappointed as New Labour moved away from British "progressivism" (Moon, 2007). Before the 1997 election, New Labour seemed to embrace the ideals of progressive politics that these thinkers advocated, and many of them publicly and enthusiastically admitted having supported

[71] Compass was initially a Labour Party pressure group constituted with Labour Party members. They soon funded the new Compass organisation in view that New Labour "was failing to make the most of a historic opportunity to fundamentally transform the UK into a much more equal, democratic and sustainable society" (Compass). Now a multi-party association, Compass coordinates discussion groups, ideas, relevant publications and action campaigns to build a "Good Society" (Compass).

New Labour hoping that the new government would devolve consensus to the left. However, as Blairism evolved in government, these writers considered that their concept of "progressive politics" was far beyond Blair's modernisation. "The systematic failures of New Labour," Neal Lawson argues, let down "the potential and hope that was invested in it to shift Britain to the left. […] [New Labour] will leave behind a more unequal and less democratic country" (Lawson in Moon, 2007: 4).

As already mentioned, some analysts and New Labour supporters argued that public services and distribution of wealth had modestly improved under New Labour. Yet, other experts claimed the opposite, that Blairism had accentuated the capitalist spirit, applied right-wing policies and failed progressive intellectuals. Journalist Simon Jenkins reminded his readers that Blair's first term was the greatest missed opportunity since his radical reforms had torn the party apart and had transformed the essence of the country. Even though many considered the 1997 election a great victory for Labour, something was lost on the way, namely its socialist principles: "We remember the victory, but not the defeat. Labour was forced to accept that there was no alternative to the message of 18 years of Tory rule. There was no going back, no socialist dawn" (Jenkins, 2000: 20). Jenkins, as many other social democrats such as Will Hutton, David Marquand and Tony Judt, exposed their discontent with the government at the end of the first term (2001) and became clear opponents of New Labour during Blair's remaining time in office.

Political economist and well-known social democrat **Will Hutton** was a reputed defender of the left's reformism in the early 1990s. Mythicised for his much-praised book *The State We're In* (1995), Hutton strongly criticised the damaging effects of Thatcherism and glimpsed, as Stuart Hall and Eric Hobsbawm had done, the need to reform the Labour Party and offer a new alternative to depose the Tories. Hutton's book illustrated the adverse legacy of Thatcherism, and the consequent deterioration of British democracy and its political and financial systems, all of which was based on a tragic interpretation of neoliberalism (Hutton, 1996: xi-xxv). Therefore, on the verge of the 1997 general election, Hutton looked at New Labour with optimism hoping that it would devolve social democracy to Britain (30). He supported many of his modernising reforms and really believed that Blair would achieve more equality in the country (Smith, 1995: 214). By 1998, Hutton had released his early disappointment with Blair's government in his contribution to the 1998 *Marxism Today* issue and other publications in different periodicals (*The Observer*, *The Political Quarterly*) where he criticised

Blair's privatisations, his detachment from the party's "old roots" (Hutton, 1998b: 30) and his evident tolerance with free market capitalism (Hutton, 1999: 99). Hutton later became a clear opponent of the Americanisation of Blair's politics through his book *The World We're In* (2002), where he denounced that the influence of Britain's transatlantic colleague would increase inequality in the UK and would worsen its public services (FitzRoy, 2004: 149).

In addition, social democrat and former Labour MP **David Marquand**, who had previously abandoned Labour in the 1980s to become a member of the Social Democratic Party (SDP)—later Liberal Democrats—became a New Labour enthusiast in 1997 when Tony Blair and his modernising project appeared. Marquand and other SDP members approved the reformation process of Neil Kinnock and his successor Tony Blair, which inspired them to re-join the Labour Party in the perspective of a possible victory under Blair (Moon, 2007: 3). Marquand, however, soon regretted it, because Blair had moved the Labour Party further to the right, a symbolic criticism if we bear in mind that the members of the SDP had abandoned Labour by leading its right-of-centre branch.

For these writers, New Labour had evolved in an unforeseen and unexpected direction, and Blair's "progressive credentials" were put into question (4), which was, according to David Moon, a generalised view: "Marquand believes that today's radical intellectuals are […] appalled by New Labour" (4). Marquand's disenchantment had begun in 1998 before the evidence that New Labour was too conservative, or at least, non-social democratic. He affirmed that Blair had no intention to undo the legacy of the Thatcher-Major years, and he had the impression that Blair was too pro-business, too pro-individualism and too meritocratic (Marquand, 1998). In the perspective of a possible second victory in the 2001 election, Marquand questioned Blair's social democratic nature:

> Ideologically speaking, the Blair project is a mess. […] If Blair really wants to inaugurate a progressive century, it is not enough to seduce former Tory voters. He must dismantle the Tory institutions over which he and his colleagues now preside, and must rewrite the Tory constitution that legitimises the pre-democratic engine of executive power they control. (Marquand, 2001: 20)

The government's first term was, according to Marquand, "very impressive [but the] authoritarian streak in New Labour […] alarmed me" (Marquand, 2010: 37).

Blair's Chicago speech in 1999 concerning the principle of liberal interventionism and the government's later participation in Kosovo and Iraq made Marquand publicly criticise the government and consequently leave the Labour Party for the second time (37). Eventually, Marquand considered New Labour undemocratic and moralistic, non-redistributive and disloyal to public services, while it presented privatisation, individualism and capitalism as inevitable (Marquand, 2006: 37).

Finally, left-wing scholar **Tony Judt**, considered a committed public thinker that often commented upon the misfortunes of global politics in the twentieth century, was another disappointed figure in the early 2000s. His analyses and criticism have been as wide and diverse as the international conflicts and the domestic affairs of America and the UK. British by birth, Judt moved to the United States where he settled as a professor at different institutions (New York University was his last), and where he was committed to denouncing world injustices. His Jewish ascendancy did not prevent him from strongly disapproving of Israel's policies in Palestine, and he was equally critical of American foreign policy and its inhuman capitalism, one of the targets of his intellectual and political writing. Contemporary Britain also became a secondary target: although he did not specifically focus on British politics, he contributed to the criticism of the Thatcher and the Blair governments, mainly as a consequence of the American influence on British culture. Defining himself as a social democrat, Judt's writings represented an apology for social democracy, as well as the need to stimulate and protect the role of the state, "the old values of good governance, [and] social and economic justice" (Mishra, 2012).

Judt's role as a committed thinker was determined by his expertise in committed intelligentsia, and more concretely, French intellectuals. He therefore considered himself as "someone who wrote publicly about public intellectuals" (Judt, 2012: 286). Timothy Garton Ash stresses that "he continued the great tradition of the *spectateur engagé*, the politically engaged but independent and critical intellectual" (Garton Ash, 2010: 6), not only for defending the essential function of intellectuals and the need of society to consider what they have to say, but also for personally involving himself in the denunciation of contemporary forms of injustice until his death in 2010. In his book *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century* (2008), the author warned against the current disappearance of intellectuals in contemporary society—or at least, the lack of a young generation of intellectuals—and reminded how persuasive these thinkers have been in influencing public opinion. Intellectuals, according to Judt,

had to be committed to "an ideal, a dogma, a project," and they "assumed de facto the role of spokesmen for the public interest and for the people, against authority and the state" (Judt, 2008: 12). In his engagement with contemporary causes, Judt also alerted of the present and urgent necessity of writing back to governments and criticise their injustices: "We need to re-learn how to criticize those who govern us," we need to be "sufficiently angry at our present condition" (Judt, 2010: 161). His polemical utterances against world issues rendered him a controversial thinker, but Garton Ash declared that Judt was the kind of intellectual "morally serious" and "fundamentally concerned with seeking the truth" (Garton Ash, 2010: 6).

Consequently, in tune with Judt's defence of social democracy and his conviction of publicly dissenting from power, it goes without saying that Judt opposed the Blair project considering it "the natural child of Margaret Thatcher" (Judt, 1998: 15). One of Judt's earlier comments against the Blair government focused on his so much commented neoliberal economic model, which, according to the author, had tremendously damaged British society (Judt, 2010). For Judt, New Labour represented the collapse of the democratic left (Wheatcroft, 2013: 10-11), as it promoted neoliberalism and the consequent "growing inequality, a declining belief in the role of the state and a falling away from civic engagement" (Patten, 2010: 39). Accordingly, Judt criticised the Third Way by considering it, from a social democratic perspective, a mere "electoral tactic […] New Labour's third way is opportunism with a human face" (Judt, 1998: 15). The Third Way showed a friendly façade of governments and markets, but involved "the dismantling of centralized public services and social safety," which was "the wrong answer" to contemporary societies (15). A propos the Third Way, Judt uttered one of his memorable statements through which he considered that "New Labourites rightly claim that Britain is a postpolitical (actually postideological) society" (Judt, 2008: 229). In Judt's perspective, this *postpolitical society* truly overcame the old era of ideologies and the crusade between socialism and neoliberalism: for Blair, all that mattered was political pragmatism.

In 2001, shortly after the second general election took place and before the evidence that Labour had become the natural party of government, Judt published an article entitled "Twas a Famous Victory" (*New York Review of Books*) where he mentioned that "this famous victory, like much else in Blair's glittering political career, was only possible thanks to a threefold inheritance from Mrs (now Lady) Thatcher"

(Judt, 2001: 24). The author blamed Thatcher for demolishing the public state and naturalising privatisations, for the destruction of the Labour Party, and the transformation of the Conservative Party by turning it unelectable (24). In his essay, Judt was especially satirical with contemporary British politics and more concretely with the Thatcherite legacy as evident in Blair's government, which he disliked. He considered that Blair was obsessed with control and privatisations, with a populist style that was ingrained in an uncertain modernisation, and on the ambiguous Third Way that caused so much ideological confusion. Judt was especially critical of the condition of the working classes, the public transport, the increase in poverty and unemployment, and the decrepitude of the old industrial and mining areas (Judt, 2008: 229). On later occasions, Judt fiercely attacked the growing inequalities, injustice, economic exploitation and the "sanctification of bankers, brokers and the new rich" (Judt, 2010: 104). He was, all in all, convinced of the importance of social democracy in contemporary societies; he believed that social democracy could give an answer to the problems of our present condition (Patten, 2010: 39) and subsequently denounced the misdirection of the Labour Party under Blair's leadership.

In sum, just after the first tenure of New Labour, and despite the diversity of reforms implemented—some of them praised by experts—Blair fuelled the enmity of progressive intellectuals and social democratic thinkers that started to admit their disillusion with Blair's conservatism. The "that is not what we meant" trademark of these thinkers (David Marquand, Will Hutton and Tony Judt) began to be a prevalent universal symbol among leftist critics. However, Blair's awareness that his public service reform had not been thoroughly developed during his first term, urged him to deliver results in these areas during his second term in office (2001—2005). Nonetheless, Blair's promises were suddenly determined by the 9/11 attacks in New York, which eventually changed the future direction of his mandate. Despite his promises to concentrate on the domestic agenda and improve public services, Blair conversely focused on foreign affairs, with the Afghanistan and Iraq wars at the front. Morally convinced of the need to get rid of evil, he took pains to join international support to back Bush's cause, which turned him into a very unpopular Prime Minister among his people and especially among intellectuals, thinkers, and scholars of the time.

Iraq would become Blair's Achilles' heel and would irrevocably dominate his political legacy. If social democracy was one of Blair's *bêtes noires* during his time in office, Iraq was the other: the unpopularity of what was regarded as an illegal war,

which followed America's interests despite the opposition of the UN and the British people, provoked the criticism of an ample layer of the intellectual class in Britain. Some supported Blair's messianic decision, but social, media and scholarly opposition was overwhelming. Academics, writers and journalists organised pressure groups, demonstrations and social protests (such as the one that took place in London on 15 February 2003), signature campaigns and petitions, and wrote a myriad of critical pieces that constitute an unachievable corpus of dissenting material on the topic. It is the aim of this dissertation to include a symbolic and representative selection of these thinkers, mainly reputed left-wing media voices who denounced two principal aspects of the war: first of all, the circumstances in which the government presented the conflict—namely the publication of the supposedly manipulated war dossier—and secondly, the disastrous consequences of the actual invasion of Iraq that spread chaos, civil war and the so much criticised immoral behaviour of British and American troops. Among the selected left-wing journalists and thinkers we find Simon Jenkins, Polly Toynbee, Tony Judt, Hugo Young, John Gray, and David Marquand, many of them systematically committed to the analysis of Blairism from its beginning. Especially Simon Jenkins, Polly Toynbee and Hugo Young followed with scepticism the birth of New Labour, the rise of Tony Blair, his development in power and his later downfall. Although their attacks on the government comprise a wide range of issues, I have here focused on the Iraq affair for its controversy and the significance of these critics' evaluations.

As I have already mentioned, America's war against al-Qaeda led the Blair government to fight a war in Afghanistan, and later carry out the so-called *war on terror* in Iraq in order to depose Saddam Hussein. Critics of the war had denounced the spurious motivations for America and Britain to lead this conflict: many have identified the American wars as neo-imperialistic attempts to protect the interests of the latter country in strategic geopolitical landmarks; other critics have emphasised the US's greed for Iraqi oil, and others stressed Blair's moral interventionism and Britain's duty to save oppressed countries from evil. For columnist **Hugo Young**, Blair "is an internationalist visionary, albeit a naïve one. He believes he was put on earth to make it a better place" (Young, 2003a: 24). For the journalist, Blair felt the moral determination to export the values of freedom and democracy to oppressed countries, setting himself up as the saving leader that was to spread goodness on earth. His special relationship

with America also yielded a high international political cost, and raised scepticism over national sovereignty at home (Young, 2003b: 22).

In February 2003, a committee from Downing Street and other US officers met some journalists in order to explain the reasons for the invasion. Journalist **Polly Toynbee**, present at the meeting, reported that they heard too many reasons for war, all of them around Saddam's crimes; however, as she affirmed: "So many reasons only underlined the lack of one overwhelming good cause" (Toynbee, 2003a: 20), and still and all, many questions remained unanswered: "Why here, why now? Why not let the weapons inspectors finish and maybe the Europeans stay on side" (20). Toynbee's assertion that the war would be legal if backed by the UN, evidenced Britain and the US's determination to depose Saddam's regime unilaterally; their disdain for a consented attack in Iraq proved their invasion undemocratic when talking at the same time and hypocritically about freedom and democracy. Before Iraq, Kosovo and the 9/11 attack had already confirmed Blair's considered moral duty, as Toynbee explains: "He offered an electrifying vision that out of tragedy would arise a wiser world where good was possible, with social justice and liberty for all" (Toynbee, 2003b: 20).

In this context, Blair's aim was not only to achieve the media support, but also to convince the Commons of the necessity to get rid of Saddam since, according to justified evidence, he possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction. This argument was developed in the war dossier that Young argued was the rational justification for Blair's moral instincts, as "he was committed to war months before he said he was. […] He needed this skewed intelligence to make the case, and he didn't really mind what he had to say to get it" (Young, 2003b: 22). However, a scandal put into question the government's credibility: as before mentioned in this dissertation, the scientist David Kelly, who was accused of leaking secret information, subsequently committed suicide. The event increased political tension, and the media pointed to a possible government's conspiracy against Kelly for revealing state secrets. For journalist **Simon Jenkins**, who was sceptical about the conspiracy theory, the key issue of the story was the too obvious "government abuse of intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction" when it published "edited material" (Jenkins, 2003: 18). For Jenkins, "what Mr Blair did was not honest […] He suppressed inconvenient truth and suggested convenient falsity" (Jenkins, 2004a: 17). In this respect, Tony Judt agreed that "no democratic state should

be able to make illegal war on the basis of a deliberate lie and get away with it" (Judt, 2010: 161).

Scarcely one year after the war, the consequences of the invasion raised categorical criticism. Despite Saddam's capture, Iraq had become a divided nation, civil war and terrorism were mining the country, and the questioned moral behaviour of American and British troops (sometimes accused of misconduct and torture to prisoners) made of Iraq a far from peaceful and idyllic country. Jenkins emphasised that the supposedly *collateral damage* in Iraq was a noxious invasion with innocent victims: "According to the latest figures from Baghdad, more Iraqis are dying from the coalition 'pacification' bombing than from any domestic terrorism" (Jenkins, 2004a: 17). In his article "I Saw our Failure through the Bars of Abu Ghraib" (2004c), the journalist denounced cruelty, violence and torture by the invading troops, and it stood out his detailed descriptions of chaos and massacre, civilians killed, and detainees abused in the Abu Grahib prison: "Yes, yes, there was a mosque bombed here, innocent families wiped out there, a power station unrestored, a hospital unprotected, 8,000 prisoners untried, but these should be seen as mere footnotes to the saga of Iraq liberation" (Jenkins, 2004c: 16). Jenkins was very critical of the treatment of prisoners: "Why empty its torture chambers of Saddam's victims only to fill them with the Pentagon's own?" (16).

Images of torture perpetrated by the coalition troops denounced the misbehaviour of American and British soldiers, and this was, in Jenkins's view, the immoral conduct of countries that advocated being the leaders of civilisation. He consequently emphasised in his article "Don't Say Sorry if You Aren't" (2004a) the inconsistencies of the Western discourse, and denounced that the US/UK coalition was abusing "the language of freedom, security, nation building and democracy" (Jenkins, 2004a: 17). After killing thousands of civilians, without a democratic resolution of the UN and leaving the country in a deep civil war, Blair and Bush's argument seemed quite cynical. What Jenkins condemned was that in a supposedly democratic nation like Britain, the Prime Minister appeared unaccountable and irresponsible for his actions, and when accused of supporting false evidence to justify the invasion, Blair remained unmoved: "Mr Blair and his colleagues will not admit that their invasion of Iraq last year was built on a lie" (17). In his sense, Young and Jenkins wondered if the accusations upon Saddam justified this deadly war: "Where are all those weapons?" (Young, 2003c: 18).

Jenkins concluded in his other article "Quit Iraq, and Quit Fast. It's that Simple" (2004b) that "the claim that the goal of removing Saddam Hussein justified any means and any consequence is intellectually absurd. However many people died? However much Muslim hatred is provoked? However much terrorism is engendered round the world?" (Jenkins, 2004b: 18).

Polly Toynbee also denounced Blair's inconsequential "doctrine" (stated as invasion for liberation) since his theoretical justification was obviously detached from the Iraqi reality: "The shining path of the Blair's doctrine looks dusty in the real hard world of the Baghdad street […] Where now is the 'moral power of the world acting as a community' as the US installs its own Iraqi exiles, and keeps the UN out?" (2003b: 20). The unsustainable situation in Iraq evidenced the Anglo-American farce; the fall of Saddam—used to validate the triumph of the invasion—did not convince many public voices in Britain, and war and terrorism magnified as time passed. There was no reconstruction plan, and Britain finally left Iraq in "a political and legal void with a foreign force failing to keep basic order" (Toynbee, 2004: 24). The eventual departure of the allied troops and the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi government were proclaimed as a symbol of the end of the conflict and the victory over Saddam, but many intellectuals denounced chaos and instability as the real reason for departure. Thus, Toynbee condemned the situation by revealing the loophole in the coalition discourse:

> On June 30, the fabled handover of sovereignty is to take place. In Washington they are clinging to the mantra that this marks a turning point, with no reason why things should get better. It's only six weeks away, but there is still no plan, not a single piece of paper yet describing exactly what powers are being transferred to whom. Who will these 10,000 prisoners belong to? How much of the oil revenues will flow directly into the interim government? Who will the new government be? (24)

In retrospect, these oppositional writers described the contrast between Blair's presentation of the Iraq war and its final result. The discourse of the West that stated its responsibility to get rid of evil, depose inhuman dictators from power and bring freedom and democracy to the oppressed was constantly ridiculed in the media even years after Blair left Number 10. Tony Judt mentioned that "Blair was too optimistic, too naïve, too idealistic, too self-confident" about Iraq (Judt in Fentiman, 2006: 1), and John Gray added that "Blair may have believed that this would be a quick spectacular

war, but reality has prevailed" (Gray, 2004: 46). This unpopular conflict damaged Blair's entire political legacy and his name remained linked to a war that "may mark the watershed in the Blair era," as Toynbee affirms (2003c: 24). Finally, in the words of David Marquand, "the monstrous shadow of Iraq has hung over Tony Blair's prime ministership for so long that it is hard to remember the achievements of his first term" (Marquand, 2007: 37).

The Iraq conflict raised the opposition of society and intellectuals, as well as of Blair's cabinet, which began to suffer the consequences of a unilateral and presidentialist governance. Some members of the government publicly opposed their leader, concretely, the speaker of the House of Commons, Robin Cook, and the Secretary of State, Clare Short, spoke against the war. *The Guardian* reported that Cook finally "resigned from the government in protest over the prime minister's stance on Iraq," blaming a government that took action against Iraq without international consent and popular support (Tempest, 2003). Clare Short, who kept her fierce criticism of her own party, equally resigned in May 2003.

Members of the Labour Party not only opposed the controversial war in Iraq, they also criticised Blair's domestic agenda. As mentioned above, foreign affairs eclipsed the second-term domestic programme, a programme that aimed to increase privatisations in the public services. Many contemporary critics complained about the recently established competitive culture and the privatisations introduced in education and the NHS, such was the case of Foundation Hospitals, characterised by a rewards-for-results code, and the reform of the school system—in which diversification and specialisation increased segregation and exclusion, not to mention the well-known introduction of University fees. These reforms, together with the Iraq war, incited parliamentarian rebellions and caused the resignation of some members of the government: apart from Robin Cook and Clare Short, Ken Livingstone and George Galloway were other significant dissidents (Seldon, 2005: 648; Ruddock, 2007: 135). The expectations of the left to fill the void of social reforms were truncated, and in view that New Labour's intentions leaned towards the introduction of the private sector and the entrepreneurial spirit in public services, Labour backbenchers publicly opposed their government. The increasing tension between the leadership, the left of the party and the unions evidenced this irretrievable division. As Jackie Ashley claimed when writing for *The New Statesman,* dissent and opposition to Blair's government eventually came from his own

party: "Labour MPs and the party in the country may be more dangerous for Blair. There is now a much bigger pool of sacked ministers and passed-over MPs, who are in no mood to sit quiescently for the next five years" (Ashley, 2001a: 8). She went on to say that it was surprising to see the Liberal Democrats addressing the demands of the unions and the supporters of classical Labour. The LibDems had therefore become representative of progressive politics in taxation, public services, environment and transport (Ashley, 2001b: 14), which signified a symbolic criticism of the U-turn in the Labour programme. In this respect, Ashley concluded, "this government is the best Conservative government we've ever had" (2001a: 8).

Similarly, author and Labour MP **Roy Hattersley** stood out as another dissenting leader within his own party. He had been a modernising centre-right figure during the 1980s and a committed supporter of the New Labour project under Blair in the early 1990s. Hattersley's vision of a renovated socialism that would break up the party's traditional link with the unions and his commitment to changing what he considered the retrograde Clause IV of the party constitution turned this politician into a Blairite enthusiast (Hattersley, 1995: 15). However, by 1998 Hattersley had begun to criticise that Blair's modernisation was a rhetorical device to win elections, and he sustained that the Labour government was not the government of the poor, of wealth redistribution and welfare (Hattersley, 1998: 30). During Blair's first years in office, Hattersley became sceptical about the perpetuation of social inequalities under Blair, which were, for instance, a consequence of the selective system in secondary schools that ultimately prevented social mobility and the improvement of the living standards of the less favoured classes (Barnard, 2001). For Hattersley, Blair's reforms increased social discrimination, making the poor poorer and the rich richer, thus confirming that the Prime Minister had abandoned traditional social democratic pledges, and proved to have moved the party further to the right (Hattersley, 2001: 25). Other analysts have equally agreed that inequality increased under Blair, as official figures showed that "the gap between rich and poor has widened by £90 a week since Labour came to power" (Helm, 2005: 2). The generalisation of Public Private Partnerships and private investment in public services, competitive ethos in hospitals and schools, and Blair's eagerness for meritocracy were the measures and the new spirit that frustrated a faction of party members, Hattersley among them. As he himself admitted, he could not agree with his own party:

> Now my party not only pursues policies with which I disagree; its whole programme is based on a principle that I reject. One thing is clear: I cannot retain both membership and self respect unless I make apparent that much of what the Labour Party now proposes is wrong. (Hattersley, 2001: 25)

"It's no longer my party," Hattersley alleged as he argued that his party had changed to position itself further to the right (25), which rendered an ironic criticism if we bear in mind that he had led the right branch of the party, being a defender himself of the ideological revisionism of the early 1990s (Diamond, 2004: 192). Pro-Blair journalist Peter Kellner also agreed that "Blair has turned Labour into a very different animal from the one that its former deputy leader spent three decades trying to nurture" (Kellner, 2001: 25). This reformism and revisionism of the party precisely increased during Blair's second term, thus reinforcing the image that "the project" had embraced the Thatcherite neoliberalism. In Hattersley's view, Blair's failure in achieving wealth distribution and equality, his defence of meritocracy, the market and the private enterprise, and finally his undemocratic and centralising measures—including the withdrawal of competences on health, education and housing from local authorities—had alienated the modernisers' early concept of "modern social democracy" (Hattersley, 2004: 29-31). Instead, as Hattersley argued, the Prime Minister had turned to marketisation and business while ignoring that modern Labourism should have been able to respond to social inequalities, respect the role of accountable and egalitarian public services, provide a new role to the unions, and guarantee "the provision of low-cost property" (31).

By the end of Blair's second term, critics assessed New Labour's legacy foregrounding that Blair had destroyed the Labour Party: "He has dismantled it piece by piece and rebuilt it in his own image" (Hattersley, 2005: 34). In Hattersley's view, Blair had degraded progressive politics and had "alienated all but the hard core of the party's support" proving his complete misunderstanding of social democracy (Hattersley, 2008: 24). According to Patrick Diamond, Blair's project raised a "profound disappointment" in some party members like Hattersley who considered that the party had abandoned its traditional commitment to social equality (Diamond, 2013: 45). In retrospect, many voices criticised Labour for the paradox of having increased social injustice in the country, while it should have contributed to reverse it: even though Blair did help improve the situation of low-income families, inequality had actually widened by the

end of his premiership, and consequently, there was "a moral imperative" of a party fully committed to equality (Hattersley, 2006: 35).

More significantly, the figure of Roy Hattersley as an internal dissident within the Labour Party has been symptomatic of New Labour's transformation. As David O'Brien suggests, during the early years of the New Labour project, Hattersley—along with Blair and Brown—had endorsed the revisionism of social democracy in order to develop "the project." However, whereas Brown and Blair accepted the New Right discourse and "challenged both the historic welfare state and the social democratic tradition," Hattersley consolidated his beliefs in equality and social justice (O'Brien, 2005: 290). As a potential candidate to leadership, Hattersley had been beaten by a charismatic Blair who apparently did not believe in ideology but in pragmatism, and Hattersley, whose theoretical and ideological nature made him one of the intellectuals of the party, soon became a secondary figure working from the margins and isolated from the political turret of Blair's leadership. Ironically regarded as a left-wing rebel in Blair's government, Hattersley symbolised the party's transformation, and his nonconformity contributed to the intellectual criticism exerted by social democracy against New Labour. Although Hattersley was a moderniser himself, he was still very critical of the far right move of his own party, as Alex Callinicos points out:

> Roy Hattersley, for example, played a leading role in attacking the party leadership's retreat from one of the historic achievements of the old revisionist Labour right—the introduction of comprehensive education in state schools. Loyal to his hero Crosland, he has also bitterly opposed the more general intellectual shift to the right. (Callinicos, 1996)

Like Hattersley himself, many others apostatised and resigned in frustration with the Labour leadership: "Half the men and women who resign from the party say they have done so because they no longer have a chance to change policies with which they disagree" (Hattersley, 2005: 35). These dissident voices represented the internal rebellions that Hattersley exemplified, those who contested Blair's monocratic government and the undisputable hegemony that by the end of his premiership was exercised according to the Prime Minister's personal convictions and in spite of the members of his cabinet, his party and the public opinion. Therefore, there was a visible evolution in Blair's leadership: the way he earned a unified support back in 1997 contrasted with his damaged authority at the end of his second term.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony, understood as "the winning of consent in order to gain and maintain power" (Davis, 2004: 46) can therefore be interpreted in the Blairite context. Blair's leadership in 1997 was achieved through the consensus and support of other possible candidates for the leadership of the party (such as Gordon Brown, John Prescott and Margaret Beckett). Once in Downing Street, Blair again worked for a unified support of his electorate, addressing and including the middle classes in the Labour programme in order to ultimately remain in power. According to Gramsci, this is how hegemony is normally achieved, through consent and negotiation with dissenters and minor classes (Gramsci, 1971: 53). In a contemporary interpretation of Gramsci's concept, Stuart Hall professes that in our modern cultures, governments have established the interests of the capitalist class through the inclusion of and negotiation with minor ideologies (Davis, 2004: 47). In this respect, Blair was precisely criticised for reproducing the neoliberal capitalist model instead of implementing the interests of social democracy, which eventually disappointed many Labour supporters in the face of the evident abandonment of those organic interests that the party represented.

Given the description of Blair's hegemonic power, we can now understand the position of these counter-hegemonic voices, that is, the British intellectuals who reacted against Blair's reproduction of the capitalist ethos, and against the manipulation of the public opinion so as to pursue the Prime Minister's personal ambitions. Blair's closure of his second term foretold the erosion of his government and the rise of a significant opposition on many fronts. Perhaps social democrats constituted the major counter-hegemonic force during Blair's second term, with early supporters such as Will Hutton and David Marquand, and left-wing committed journalists such as Polly Toynbee and Simon Jenkins: they all publicly opposed what they thought to be New Labour's undemocratic policies. After having been the acclaimed populist leader of the "Cool Britannia" years, by 2005 Blair seemed to be consumed in unconvincing political manifestos, surrounded by a generalised social desertion, with his profile internationally damaged because of the Iraq war, and repudiated by the British left because of his reactionary performance in government.

In tune with previous dissenting groups of intellectuals, this selection of thinkers constitutes a representative and symbolic opposition to the Prime Minister's hegemony. These were the real intellectuals that remained loyal to the organic interests and the

founding principles of social democracy by standing for social justice, redistribution of wealth, and a democratic and inclusive exercise of politics. Their function as counter-hegemonic voices was demonstrated through their public denunciation of Blair's authority, and their "angry" commitment to "their present condition" (Judt, 2010: 161). By the end of Blair's second term, his hegemony was widely and openly contested, from within and outside his own party. This will be the beginning of the end, when, despite a historic third victory in the general election of 2005, Blair's government was very much discredited.

5.4 BLAIR'S END AND HIS LEGACY (2005—2007)

In 1994 Blair had decided to run for the Labour Party leadership election despite the latent ambition of Gordon Brown who considered himself the natural heir of John Smith. In the well-known *Granita* deal, Blair promised to delegate to Brown during Labour's second term, but Blair not only ignored this so-many-times questioned promise, but also announced that he would run for the third general election on 5 May 2005. The war in Iraq and the subsequent situation of eternal chaos and civil war in the mentioned country made Blair consider the opportunity to complete a third term and solve the underlying image of failure that had begun to prevail during his last years in government. Moreover, his obsession with the New Labour programme also drove him to close his ambitious project. With his popularity damaged, and despite predictions of an electoral defeat, Blair won his third consecutive election due to the recently constituted centrist electorate of the middle classes that were now detached from left and right extremes, coupled with other factors, such as a successful economy and the still immature state of the Conservative Party (McKibbin, 2005: 7-8). Blair's last years in government were devoted to the last reforms in the public sector (with privatisation of schools, the disappointing increase of pensions, and a more radical law and order approach), although these were constantly eclipsed by perpetual conflicts with Brown, by the opposition within his own party, and the persistent request on the part of the media to leave power. The conjunction of these factors and the consequent degradation of his government made Blair finally resign on 27 June 2007. It was the definitive signal that the enthusiasm that had greeted New Labour back in 1997 had turned into disenchantment and frustration.

By 2007, many critics and analysts assessed Blair's legacy and his most iconic achievements and failures in innumerable publications. The magazine *New Statesman* (NS)—which had followed the evolution of the Labour Party and the British left from and within the left—published a special issue in May 2007 on purpose of Blair's resignation. Many thinkers and critics of the day contributed with different essays to measure what they thought it was the Blair legacy. Some of the participant writers were David Hare, David Marquand, Geoff Mulgan, John Gray, John Lloyd, Peter Wilby, Suzanne Moore, and many others who shared their views about the outcome of Blairism. Their essays highlighted the process of disenchantment that society and thinkers experienced under "the project." **Suzanne Moore**, for instance, stated: "The current 'structure of feeling' has moved inevitably from hope to disillusionment" (Moore, 2007: 40). The journalist denounced that New Labour had fractured the country in terms of social structures, values, and contemporary culture. Whereas the 1997 election reflected the enthusiasm of a whole generation, Blair's departure revealed social pessimism and frustration:

> Ten years ago we saw ourselves reflected by Blair as young and energetic. Now we look broken down, grubby, anxious. The progressive narrative has disintegrated, the very goals of liberty and equality are deemed impossible, but still we are told things have got better. We are so disenchanted that we no longer trust that they have. (43)

The New Statesman and its evaluations of New Labour were, in general terms, critical of the Prime Minister and his modernising process. More specifically, Blair's approach to social services had been disappointing, and his performance in foreign affairs, reactionary. **Bhikhu Parekh** remarked, for instance, that despite Blair's achievements—Northern Ireland, the minimum wage, and limited reforms in NHS—his major failures had been the war in Iraq, his centralisation of power and the alienation of the Labour Party, all of which made the party unrecognisable and provoked an identity crisis (Parekh, 2007: 47). **John Gray**, for his party, praised that Tony Blair had been the best leader that the Labour Party had ever had, and contrarily, the leader that most had damaged it (Gray, 2007: 48). Blair's rightwards transformation of the party broke it apart, not as a primal intention to betray the original principles of its ideology, but as an electoral strategy to return to power (48). His adaptation of Thatcher's success entailed the inclusion of the markets in the management of public services (education, health), the centralisation of power, and the destruction of the Old Labour organic culture. As

Gray pointed out: "Tony Blair will be remembered for using his party as a vehicle for an outdated version of the Thatcher Project" (48).

In tune with this kind of criticism but in different publications, Stuart Hall and Eric Hobsbawm also examined Blair's legacy by pointing out that Blair's conservatism was a consequence of his adaptation of Thatcher's dogmas, her achievements in economy and electoral tactics, and the belief that the free market, neoliberalism and globalisation were irreversible: "New Labour since 1997 swallowed the ideology, or rather the theology, of global free-market fundamentalism whole" (Hobsbawm, 2009: 33). For Hobsbawm, New Labour had abandoned its commitment to the working class, the unions, social justice, equality and socialism, and they contrarily proclaimed the need to revalue the public redistribution of wealth "that is the basis of progressive policy" (33). The welfare state was, this time for Hall, a historical Labourite achievement, and it had been precisely New Labour the one in charge of dismantling it by transforming social democracy into neoliberalism through the "managerial marketization" of social services (Hall, 2011: 714). Hall thus criticised Labour's modernisation, "for what they mean by it is marketization, individualism, going to the private market, getting everything to model entrepreneurship…" (Hall in Davis, 2004: 201). He judged Blair's legacy as mere neoliberalism:

> Globally, New Labour agreed that developing countries must be exposed to the bracing winds of free trade and foreign investment. The main purpose of global governance was to protect markets and investments and maintain the conditions for the successful pursuit of global capitalist Enterprise. (Hall, 2011: 716)

In the *New Statesman* special issue in 2007, other writers continued their assessment of Blairism. **Peter Wilby**, former editor of the magazine, also contributed with an article to judge Blair's heritage. He had been a Labour member for more than thirty-five years, and although a moderniser himself (he agreed on some of Blair's early reforms and consequently voted for him in 1997), Wilby was similarly suspicious of Blair's trajectory and became a New Labour opponent from the beginning. As *NS* editor, he represented the magazine's opposition to the government: "We did indeed publish much criticism of Blair" (Wilby, 2007: 47). For Wilby, the magazine was a reference for progressive writers who had traditionally supported Labour, yet "Blair sent the NS into bitter opposition to a Labour government. Some achievement" (47). His personal

attacks on New Labour focused on the increasing inequality, the disappointing public spending and a welfare reform that did not help the poor (Wilby, 2006: 28).

Again, Iraq was identified as another iconic failure of the Blair premiership. Blair's "special relationship" with the American neo-cons and his unconditional support for the US imperialist interests aroused fervent criticism. In the magazine, **David Hare** declared that after Iraq, many British citizens and intellectuals lost trust in the government, a trust that stemmed from the image of an admired young politician who was considered a natural orator and whose "politeness," "directness" and honesty had convinced many voters in the past (Hare, 2007: 32). By the end of his premiership, the war "seemed to represent a sort of desolate milestone beyond which no real honesty was any longer possible in the Labour Party about anything" (32). He was wrong about Iraq, even though he insisted that only him could see the rightness of his decision (34), he deceived the public and undermined international institutions (*New Statesman*, 2007: 4). In this sense, Hall, in a later publication in the journal *Cultural Studies*, pointed out that the so much unpopular conflict, which was based on the manipulation of the war dossier and the public opinion, "was compromised by the specious logic, the dissembling, the secret agreements, the sexed-up documents and flawed intelligence. His [Blair's] reputation has never recovered" (Hall, 2011: 717). Similarly, in a broadcast interview, Hobsbawm reported the Iraq affair as an outdated form of moralist imperialism:

> The interesting thing about the Iraq war is that unlike the first gulf war, unlike even the first American intervention after 9/11 in Afghanistan, it has no common support, at all. Blair rushed in, because I think he loved the idea of being as it were a deputy imperial power. And let's make no mistake about it: he also thought somehow or other, there needed to be Western force which somehow controlled the disorder in the world—which is no longer controllable by anybody in the old 19th Century imperial way. That's the thing to remember. (Hobsbawm, 2012a)

In his article for the NS, **Geoff Mulgan** represented one of the few exceptions that exonerated Blair from his responsibility in Iraq. In 1998 when he contributed to the special issue of *Marxism Today*, his defence of the Prime Minister turned him into one of those intellectual insiders of New Labour, and later in 2007 when Blair resigned, his justification of the government's performance remained. Over Iraq, Mulgan defended Britain's role in the war and declared that Blair had been very unlucky for coinciding with weak European politicians who vetoed the UN resolutions: "I am one of those who think that there were good grounds for intervention in an Iraq that wanted the world to

believe it had WMDs" (Mulgan, 2007: 31). For Mulgan, Blair's vision of a twenty-first century global politics implied the necessity of international intervention for humanitarian reasons, and only Blair seemed to envision the magnitude of his intentions (31). According to Mulgan, the Iraq war eventually eclipsed Blair's achievements, such as his economic success, his modernisation of the Labour Party making it a "winning machine," his restructuring and recovery of public services and the enhancement of poverty and unemployment (29). He was "an extraordinarily skilled politician" who "left Britain, for most of its citizens, a more pleasant place to live" (29).

As already shown, and despite Mulgan's exception, the *New Statesman* special issue on purpose of Blair's departure from government was, broadly speaking, an important sample of the widespread antagonism that existed after New Labour's ten years in office. Other publications, institutions and political movements similarly shared this pessimistic vision and were also committed to expressing their criticism. The *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) provided the space for well-known activists, writers, scholars and academics to react against Blair's forthcoming legacy. Alex Callinicos, Chris Marsden and Lindsey German were among the voices that sharply criticised Blair's politics during his last years in power, as well as the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) that also used this platform to put forth its views against the government.[72] Concretely, the latter was particularly critical of the outcome of Blairism: "Blair leaves office as an unindicted war criminal and the first sitting prime minister in history to be interviewed as part of a police investigation (the 'cash for honours' scandal)" (SEP, 2007). The party went on, saying:

> Just as in the US, his "war on terror" rhetoric has been used to justify the most antidemocratic and authoritarian measures.
>
> Just as importantly, his reputation has been built on the huge transfer of wealth from working people to the global financial corporations and the super-rich that he helped engineer in the UK. (2007)

Also, professor Chris Marsden pointed out in the mentioned website that "since 1997, Labour has overseen a historically unprecedented shift in wealth away from the

[72] Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world party of socialist revolution. The party leads a socialist movement inspired in Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky's teachings in order to achieve the overthrow of the capitalist system, the elimination of class oppression, and face inequalities in contemporary culture (SEP "About SEP").

working class and into the coffers of the major corporations and a fabulously rich elite" (Marsden, 2007).

In view of the above, many liberal intellectuals agreed on the widespread disenchantment with the Prime Minister by the end of his premiership. These authors utilised different publications and public platforms of criticism—such as the *New Statesman* issue in 2007, or the *World Socialist Web Site*—to express their discontent with the government as well as their disappointment with what the Labour Party should have delivered. In this sense, and as previously discussed, Eric Hobsbawm and Stuart Hall frequently confessed their disillusion. For Hobsbawm, the kind of "neosocialism" that he had advocated a decade before "should carry out active policies on the left. The case against New Labour in Britain when it came to power is that it did not do so" (2012b). Regarding Stuart Hall, he was "deeply politically disillusioned […] The points of reference that organised my political world and my political hopes are not around any more. The very idea of the 'social' and the 'public' has been specifically liquidated by new Labour" (2006). Likewise, author Nick Cohen, when writing in relation to Blair's legacy, equally acknowledged that the consequences of New Labour's performance in government had strongly damaged the left: "New Labour represented the final triumph of the right. […] What happened was a disgrace to the best traditions of the British left" (2006: 16).

All in all, these intellectuals' global assessment of Blairism accentuated the generalised perception that New Labour was a missed opportunity, disappointing therefore social democrats that claimed for a defence of the state and the public services. These critics witnessed a political and ideological transformation that perpetuated Thatcher's reforms and her neoliberal and individualistic principles. While experts and some of Blair's supporters pointed out that his legacy was not as pessimistic as it was believed, and that the state of Britain in 2007 was far from the hyperbolic consideration that Blairism was "Thatcherism in trousers" (Hobsbawm, 1998: 4), others concluded that "Blair's government has been so disappointing not because it is without achievement, but because its achievements are much less than they might have been and its mistakes much worse" (McKibbin, 2007: 26).

5.5 FINAL THOUGHTS

This historical account of counter-hegemonic British voices under Blairism represents a selection and analysis of those texts written by committed public figures, theorists and critics, who openly opposed the government of Tony Blair. According to these critics' political perceptions, we have seen how many of them supported Blair's project in 1997, either because they were positive about a reform within the left, or because they were to vote Labour to get the Tories out of power. Some of them were initially optimistic about the changes that a young and modern Labour leader promised. Others were suspicious of Blair's new ideological attachments, and prognosticated an ensuing disenchantment with the evident U-turn in traditional Labour policies. Either way, time in government for New Labour actually confirmed some of these writers' predictions and progressively revealed that Blair's reforms adhered, according to many of these intellectuals, to certain Thatcherite principles. David Marquand describes the general state of British intelligentsia by the end of Blair's tenure as follows: "The radical intelligentsia is more confused, unhappy and alienated than at any time I can remember" (Marquand, 2007: 37). Eric Hobsbawm also considered the tragic effect that New Labour had in liberal and progressive thinkers: "His period of government demoralised Labour's traditional supporters and antagonised the liberal/progressive educated classes" (Hobsbawm, 2007b: 47). Furthermore, David Moon also stated that "for those longing for a 'progressive' politics, New Labour has been a disappointment, and the future of what small time is left under Blair brings little hope of change" (Moon, 2007: 8).

These statements and the collection of voices here represented demonstrate that, despite pessimism and frustration, British intelligentsia was active and operative during the Blair years, and reacted overwhelmingly against the government with a vast number of essays and journalistic pieces. It has therefore been unattainable to cope with all the intellectual demonstrations published against Blair, but it is the hope and aim of this dissertation to include a representative selection of voices that denounced what they thought it was Blair's conservatism and his mishandling of domestic and foreign affairs.

Hence, in the debate of the existence or not of British intellectuals, Terry Eagleton lamented what he called "the absence of intellectuals," meaning that "if they are to be found there much less these days, it is partly because the number of public intellectuals on the left has notably declined" (Eagleton, 2008). His vision of the contemporary intellectual—mostly accommodated middle-class writers and thinkers—embodies a

figure committed to superficial comments on culture, instead of showing "disinterested passion for truth and justice" (2008). However, despite the fact that there always exist conformist and conventional thinkers, I have aimed to prove through the course of this dissertation that many factions within the British intelligentsia were thoroughly active and committed, and thus very much alive.

These days, it seems easier to find a hybrid kind of intellectual, from the old kind of philosopher who revolves around social democratic spheres (such as Eric Hobsbawm, Stuart Hall, and David Marquand) to more contemporary political analysts writing for newspapers (Polly Toynbee, Andrew Marr, Hugo Young). Highbrow thinkers now contribute to online publications, and those hired by reputed newspapers publish books and essays for academic journals. It is misguided, therefore, to analyse the role of the contemporary intellectual as a complete outsider, since the word itself is slippery nowadays and correspondingly distant from the outmoded image of the isolated bohemian artist. These critics are today analysts who fluctuate around the borders of the anti-establishment/establishment, but it will be their belligerent position to culture and politics what will define their ultimate and specific definition as intellectuals.

Edward Said stressed that the intellectual had to be independent from power in order to speak the truth. For Said, the real intellectual is the outsider, the marginal and the amateur who works to achieve social change; however, in our contemporary society independence from authority is never complete, as the intellectual is often associated and attached to certain groups or institutions (a university, a newspaper, a social class). Intellectuals should ideally work individually and independently from structural circles that might restrain their political voice, but reality shows that "every human being is held in by a society" (Said, 1996: 69). The role of the counter-hegemonic intellectual should be therefore assessed in terms of his/her social function, since

> It is a spirit in opposition, rather than in accommodation, that grips me because the romance, the interest, the challenge of intellectual life is to be found in dissent against the status quo at a time when the struggle on behalf of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups seems so unfairly weighted against them. (Said, 1996: xvii)

Despite the intellectuals' "accommodation," it is their dissenting attitude what makes them function in sectarian ways, as long as they remain faithful to organic interests, maintain their relentless criticism of power, and actively endorse a public opinion on "issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug" (11). In this

respect, thinkers such as Eric Hobsbawm and Stuart Hall were not only dependent on a particular university or an ideological community, but they were also critical of their own traditions and consistently opposed power and governments. Other figures, such as journalists Andrew Marr, Polly Toynbee, and Simon Jenkins, or Labour MPs such as Roy Hattersley—despite their associations with an acknowledged newspaper or their own political party—passionately reacted against Blair's perceived betrayal of the principles of his party and the dogmas of equality and social justice. In general terms, these intellectuals' final aim was to publicly oppose a government that deceived their expectations, essentially social democratic demands that coherently corresponded to the organic principles they claimed to defend. Notwithstanding all kind of criticism attached to these thinkers—sometimes for being hypocritical, contradictory or fully unengaged—they have systematically participated in the intellectual analysis and criticism of Blairism and have denounced what they thought it was Blair's authoritarian exercise of power with the hope of broadening our understanding of the world and ultimately change it.

6. ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS AS CRITICAL RESPONSES TO BLAIRISM

One of the major points of this dissertation concerns the involvement of British intellectuals in the contemporary political life of Britain: many have participated, in a wide and diverse range of forms and styles, in the analysis—with mostly critical assessments—of Tony Blair's premiership. In opposition to this view, some authors have commented, as stated in previous chapters of this study, that the demise of the politically committed intellectual is becoming regularly evidenced, and that the disappearance of intellectuals and their dissident forms of action leave governments unquestioned and only superficially damaged. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Terry Eagleton complained about "the absence of intellectuals" (Eagleton, 2008) and denounced the lack of systematically committed left-wing thinkers, who have recently become accommodated and conformist theorists detached from the real problems of society. Similarly, in "Who will Fill the Intellectual Vacuum?" (1996), Andrew Marr ironically stated that "once upon a time, there were intellectuals" (Marr, 1996c: 17), extinct writers who "wore pebble glasses and stern expressions, sat around in cafes and acted as the collective conscience for politics: they provided a bridge between philosophy and power" (17). This bohemian type of philosopher of the old times has given way to "academics, authors and journalists" who seem to be "ignored by people of power" (17). For Marr, "there are some old Marxists left," but the great intellectuals are gone (17). In this respect, Michel Foucault also mentioned that the old intellectual, the one that used his/her knowledge to lead and guide political struggles and behaved as the "jurist" appealing to universal justice, has become extinct:

> The "universal" intellectual, as he functioned in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was […] the man of justice, the man of law, who counterposes to power, despotism and the abuses and arrogance of wealth the universality of justice and the equity of an ideal law. (Foucault, 1980: 128)

Foucault, in his *Power/Knowledge* theory, interpreted the notion of the "great writer" as an inefficacious concept to identify the contemporary intelligentsia. He argued that the great writer, the universal intellectual "spoke and was acknowledged the right of speaking in the capacity of master of truth and justice […]. To be an intellectual meant something like being the consciousness/conscience of us all" (126). For Foucault, the intellectual used to be a defender of morality, the bearer of the political truth and the model to follow in the proletarian battle. However, he added, this type of intellectual and his outmoded societal role was disappearing, as contemporary intellectuals do not work within the universal, but within the specific sectors of their expertise. That is to say, the diversity and complexity of contemporary life has alienated the role of the considered old intellectual who searched and fought for one single truth; now, the new emerging intellectual voices, who today respond to multiple and diverse forms of social and political life, have seen themselves functioning as referential voices speaking from their different professions and fields of knowledge. These are the new "specific" intellectuals,

> Magistrates and psychiatrists, doctors and social workers, laboratory technicians and sociologists have become able to participate, both within their own fields and through mutual exchange and support, in a global process of politicisation of intellectuals. (127)

In other words, the new intellectuals are those whose "specific activity" becomes politicised, and they become autonomous in their struggle for rights, truth and justice. The democratisation of knowledge allows different professionals to become independently political, seizing "the sacralising mark" of the old intellectual, as *writing* is no longer distinctive of the intellectual (127). The universal intellectual had the erudite knowledge that made him/her special, yet contemporary culture has turned popular knowledge and specific expertise into a political instrument, which means that when the specific professional or the holder of popular knowledge becomes politicised and engaged in a political cause exercises the function of the contemporary intellectual.

The modern intellectual is not the visionary writer, but the one who uses his specific knowledge at the service of a political cause:

> The figure in which the functions and prestige of this new intellectual are concentrated is no longer that of the "writer of genius", but that of "absolute savant", no longer he who bears the values of all, opposes the unjust sovereign or his ministers and makes his cry resound even beyond the grave. It is rather he who, along with a handful of others, has at his disposal, whether in the service of the State or against it, powers which can either benefit or irrevocably destroy life. […] Meanwhile we are at present experiencing the disappearance of the figure of the "great writer." (129)

What Foucault called "the disappearance of the great writer" might to some extent recall Eagleton's "absence of intellectuals" (2008). However, I would like to demonstrate in this study that Eagleton's criticism of intellectuals, and his statements questioning their functionality need to be countered with Foucault's point that intellectuals have changed and that they need to be acknowledged by new standards. For Eagleton, the authentic left-wing intellectuals are disappearing, and have, in turn, become accommodated middle-class writers and thinkers who have abandoned the unconditional commitment to truth and justice (2008). Conversely, for Foucault, while the great writer is no longer common in contemporary society, there are other "absolute savants" or "experts" (Foucault, 1980: 128) that do participate in political struggles, yet they lack "erudite knowledge" or the reputed condition of preceding intellectuals.

In this respect, and as I defend in this dissertation, the type of modern intellectual does not exclusively correspond with the outmoded profile of intellectually elitist critic, it contrastingly embodies a diverse characterisation of professionals that eagerly oppose and denounce power. Here, I distance myself from those statements that describe the fall of the intellectual: today, intellectuals are alive and very much operative, but some of their shapes and formats—and their sometimes unexpected fields of action—make them less open to public recognition. This dissertation examines a group of diverse intellectuals who are defined as such not according to their origins, education or the intricacies of their intellectual reflections, but in terms of their functional dissidence by criticising and opposing the government of Tony Blair. The nature of intellectuals is constantly changing, and they cannot be judged by the standards of yesteryear; instead, intellectuals also renew their styles and profiles. This dissertation shows that there is such a thing as the British intellectual today, he/she simply adjusts to new times, and

acquires new forms and significations. If traditional standards are no longer valid to determine who contemporary intellectuals are, as well as the nature of their social role, how can we identify them as such? According to Foucault, one needs to question, first of all, who defines what truth is, and secondly, the mechanisms and criteria that legitimise such truth in order to ultimately modify

> the rules of formation of statements which are accepted as scientifically true. […] It is a question of what governs statements, and the way in which they govern each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable, and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures. (Foucault, 1980: 112)

Therefore, Foucault's aim is "to analyse the conditions under which we might consider certain utterances or propositions to be agreed to be true" (Mills, 2003: 25) which are, in turn, based on "legislation," "discourse" or "organisation" (Foucault, 1980: 106). For Foucault, societies establish their standards of truth, their "politics of truth," that is, "the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements" (131). Truth and knowledge are legitimised by the validation of a reputed or official institution that establishes something as true and scientific, or by some established standards that delimit the acknowledged stories, and the excluded voices. Sara Mills explains: "All these institutions work to exclude statements which they characterise as false and they keep in circulation those statements which they characterise as true" (Mills, 2003: 58). Therefore, there are two types of knowledge in Foucauldian theory, the "erudite knowledge" and the "disqualified/subjugated knowledges." The former comprises the unity of knowledge, that is, one acknowledged truth, while the latter recognises the multiplicity of truth, the repressed knowledges that "have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation" (Foucault, 1980: 81). These are the untold stories, or the repressed voices that are excluded from reputed/erudite knowledge, analysis and criticism, and are "located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (82).

In this sense, we have witnessed how the traditional standards for intellectual recognition correspond with an old-fashion and elitist yardstick that hardly fits the contemporary intellectual expression: this outmoded standard includes and identifies an extinct type of obsolete intellectual, and excludes many different kinds of intellectual representations that today better perform the specific function of oppositional

intelligentsia. Due to the fact that the intellectuals who have been widely and intimately linked to high culture and the most elitist spheres of thinking have been recently disappearing, it is easy to think that their organic societal role is also vanishing. Contrarily, this dissertation aims to open the scope of intellectual recognition and includes a sector of the political debate that actively contributed to the intellectual analysis and criticism of Blair's government on the margins of classical intelligentsia.

The need to consider a new and more complex type of intellectual committed to contemporary politics goes in line with global changes in society and culture. In the current cultural and intellectual complexity, cross-cultural products (literature, music and cinema) constitute the basis of contemporary analysis: the democratisation of knowledge and the generalisation of access to culture help the general public and popular artists participate in intellectual conceptualisations of contemporaneity. The new times now require new forms of intelligentsia that have begun to appear on the margins of the establishment, such is the case of the world of arts and letters, in which "The new writing […] had not one but multiple faces and could be found just around the corner, in the shopping centres, the disco-clubs and in the streets of sub-urban neighbourhoods" (Fernández, 2013: 3). The new type of writer, artist and intellectual negotiates the boundaries between high and low culture: many still belong to the elitist circles of books, theories and knowledge, yet many others are born out of the counter-culture exclusion, and the wide fields of common popular culture.

The artistic and cultural manifestations selected in this chapter respond to Foucault's pledge to question the mechanisms that legitimise knowledge and therefore the type of intellectuals that are officially regarded as such: are intellectuals considered as officially elitist and established figures? Or could intellectuals integrate those traditionally excluded voices that sometimes revolve around ordinary cultural domains in their political struggles? Popular culture and its material productions are therefore treated, in this dissertation, as valid intellectual representations of the critical responses to Blair's policies and as representations that respond to the functional criteria—in terms of oppositional attitudes—that have identified the majority of the intellectuals previously selected in this study. Faithful to those organic interests of truth and justice, the personalities identified in this chapter have publicly denounced the failures of Blairism, and have contributed to outline the deficiencies of a political project that initially raised positive expectations and later turned into disappointment. Unlike the

previous chapters, some of the figures selected here do not belong to reputed intellectual or media circles, but their critical and dissenting function in the intellectual debate will be considered equally valid in the context of interdisciplinary studies such as this one that aim to integrate other unacknowledged forms of cultural criticism. In agreement with other analyses in Cultural Studies, I vindicate the legitimacy of the following artistic expressions to perform a social function and embody political struggles. The arts selected in this dissertation (music, cinema and political cartoons) precisely fulfil the ideological and political function of both representing and questioning structural power and the society in which they are born. The popular arts here included are examples of how popular culture and artistic products become political objects that oppose and resist a particular social and historical conjuncture. Artists and their creations are products of their own time, they consequently react against what they consider unfair in their societies, and aspire to contribute to a new and better understanding of the world. For John A. Walker,

> There are many who still regard art as a realm of value which transcends ideology, politics and class struggle altogether, even though it is impossible to understand art as a *social* phenomenon without reference to the structure of the society within which it is produced, and understanding that social context inevitably involves consideration of such issues as class, ideology, economics, politics, power, gender and race. (Walker, 2001: 2)

Against those voices that defend that "images which are politically partisan are propaganda, not art" (3) this study aims to endorse art as being always political and always influential, since "art and propaganda are not necessarily mutually exclusive" (3). The following artists, intellectuals and cultural personalities, with their critical responses to Blairism, performed their role as counter-power figures denouncing the government of Tony Blair, deconstructing his political discourse, and demonstrating that there was a moral alternative to the events that twenty-first-century Britain faced. Conclusively, John Berger's notion of art reminds us that its function is precisely to conceptualise contemporary culture and contribute to political struggles:

> I can't tell you what art does and how it does it, but I know that often art has judged the judges, pleaded revenge to the innocent and shown to the future what the past suffered, so that it has never been forgotten. I know too that the powerful fear art, whatever its form, when it does this, and that amongst the people such art something runs like a rumour and a legend because it makes sense of what life's

> brutalities cannot, a sense that unites us, for it is inseparable from a justice at last. Art, when it functions like this, becomes a meeting-place of the invisible, the irreducible, the enduring, gut and honour. (Berger, 1991: 9)

Ultimately, with regards to the methodological structure of this dissertation, I have maintained a timeline of organisation of the texts here analysed, and I have classified the examined critical figures and artists chronologically, so as to identify the curve of disenchantment that the New Labour project caused in intellectual, artistic and cultural disciplines. Although all of these cultural representations took place throughout the ten years of Blair's premiership, for methodological reasons I have classified them into three distinct groups, according to Blair's three terms in office, when each cultural manifestation was distinctively relevant. I will therefore analyse critical narratives of Blairism in the form of contemporary music (Blair's first term in office), films and TV series (second term), and political cartoons (third term and decline). Filmmakers such as Armando Iannucci, Stephen Frears, and Roman Polanski, political cartoonist Steve Bell, and pop bands such as *Radiohead, Oasis*, George Michael, and *Pulp* among others will represent the different readings of Blair's political project: some of them will reflect the optimism that New Labour inspired back in the late 1990s, and others will criticise Blair's consecutive reforms and final outcome.

6.1 "COOL BRITANNIA" AND BRITPOP: EARLY ENTHUSIASM

When Tony Blair was elected leader of Labour in 1994, he fostered a modernisation process within the ideology of his party that was soon extended, as an electoral strategy, to the modernisation of the whole culture and national identity. New Labour's "**Cool Britannia**" was the catchphrase used to label a cultural movement of pop music, art and fashion that projected Britain to the world scene through an aura of modernisation, youth and dynamism, which connected these features to the principles of the party:

> "Cool Britannia" was a buzzing phrase in Britain during the late 1990s. Coined by the media to denote a renaissance in British art, fashion, design and music, the term encapsulated the broader sense of a nation newly invigorated in the wake of the election of Tony Blair's ("New") Labour government in 1997. (Osgerby, 2005: 127)

This cultural phenomenon lasted from 1996 to 1998 (Leonard, 1998) and was promoted by the Labour Party, in and out of government, to detach its political alternative from the old cultural heritage of Thatcherism and thus win electoral support. "New Labour, New Britain," the party's slogan, connected the new ethos of the party—suddenly dissociated from old ideological dogmas—to popular mass culture, creating consequently cultural and affective associations between a new wave of British nationalism and a new political party.

The importance of popular culture in Labour's success was due to the bond between youth culture and the new image of the party, as Blair presented himself as "conversant with popular culture and at ease with 'the kids'" (Osgerby, 2004: 75). Music in particular played a key role in the political birth of New Labour: the rise of Britpop in the 1990s anchored its followers and consumers with a particular social identity, and by extension, with the modernisation of a political party: "Such associations enable the politician to connect—often temporarily—with the achievements, activities and attributes of others, and to share in the 'cool' image they are believed to project" (Inglis, 2010: 65). Many bands were therefore associated with "Cool Britannia" and the modernisation of national identity; some of them were *Radiohead, Portished, Pulp, Massive Attack* and the *Spice Girls* (with Geri Halliwell's memorable Union Jack dress at the 1997 Brit Awards, emphasising the connection between Britpop and nationalism). However, it would be *Blur* and *Oasis* the bands that most consolidated New Labour's popularity and were closely related to the rise of Tony Blair. It is thus easy to portray the rise and fall of New Labour through the representations of some of these bands that contributed to sketch the early optimism that New Labour inspired and the later disaffections of a disappointing government.

The affair of Britpop and New Labour became consequently a twofold effect phenomenon. On the one hand, these bands embraced the new government with hopeful expectations and optimism in view that this political and cultural renovation would represent a rupture with the Thatcherite past. As many of them stemmed from working-class backgrounds, they were also politically concerned about the future of their country. On the other hand, the Blair project made use of this cultural and artistic renaissance in favour of his party, renewing its image and winning voters. The Prime Minister would associate himself with these celebrities and would publicly defend the inclusion of popular culture in the New Labour programme. As part of this political strategy, Blair invited pop stars such as Noel Gallagher of *Oasis* to a Downing Street celebrity

reception in 1997 (Walden, 2005: 23)—just as he had previously done with reputed intellectuals—in order to make, first of all, the government attractive, and secondly, to legitimise its discourse.

The demise of Thatcherism and the generalised pessimism suddenly contrasted with the optimism of the New Labour experience, rendered in the belief that "things can only get better" as *D:Ream*'s song said, a song used by Labour as their campaign anthem. This widespread positivism related to the political enthusiasm of Blair's project was analysed in the documentary film *Live Forever: The Rise and Fall of Brit Pop* (2003); written and directed by John Dower, it shows how Britpop developed in parallel with New Labour, how British bands supported the rise of Tony Blair, and how the raising enthusiasm collaterally spread around popular culture and politics:

> Britain was of a time, of a people, of a place, which captured the world's imagination. A bright new culture deserved a bright new government and it seemed, for a little while at least, that Britain had one. (Dower, *Live Forever* 2003)

Alastair Campbell, Blair's Director of Communications and Strategy (1997—2003), also reflected this excitement of cultural and political renaissance: "Something has shifted, there's a new feeling on the streets. There's a desire for change. Britain is exporting pop music again. Now all we need is a new government" (Alastair Campbell in Dower, *Live Forever* 2003). The government's strategy to portray an intellectually and culturally sociable new party led Blair to fraternise with both highbrow intellectuals and lower spheres of pop culture (i.e. the British punk rock of the 1970s and 1980s) whose demands had previously been ignored. Now it was the time to integrate those disaffected voices that claimed for a "new dawn" in the political and cultural life of Britain, thus motivating these bands to reflect the spirit of the times in their music.

Oasis would be the band that best described the perception of New Labour during the Blair years. Their sometimes-committed political messages, embedded in their working-class upbringing in Manchester, echoed the political affairs of the 1990s from the end of Thatcherism through the early enthusiasm of Blair's rise to power, particularly New Labour's success. Like the intellectuals who had also mirrored recent events in their novels or journalistic pieces, *Oasis*'s songs had denounced, for instance, the state and conditions of the working class during the Thatcherite period. Their songs "Up in the Sky" and "Cigarettes and Alcohol" from their album *Definitely Maybe*

(1994) lamented the low expectations of the working class: "You could wait for a lifetime / to spend your days in the sunshine [. . .] is it worth the aggravation / to find a job when there is nothing worth working for?" (*Oasis*, 1994). Their later song "Don't Look Back in Anger," from their album (*What's the Story) Morning Glory?* (1995),[73] was an inspiration to look at the future with optimism, a message that could have a coherent political reading in those pre-Blair years. Nevertheless, it would be their song "Some Might Say" (1995) one of the key representations of the growing optimism: it illustrated how music caught the spirit of the time, how the brightness and positivity of that age symbolised the end of a political era (Dower, *Life Forever* 2003) and suggested that things were going to get better: "Some might say that sunshine follows thunder [. . .] some might say that we will find a brighter day" (*Oasis*, 1995).

Alan McGee, *Oasis*'s former manager, and leader Noel Gallagher were the most politically committed figures of the band. Blair's speeches inspired them in the hope that things would change for the better (Seymour, 1996: 6). Especially McGee was mindful of his role, and the band's power, to influence the masses and help their admired Labour candidate reach Number 10. McGee's working-class origins made him very aware of what it was like being underclass, as well as of the importance of health services, the protection of pensioners, the mentally ill and the disabled (6). For that reason he supported Blair, who seemed to be a different politician: "After meeting him I believe he genuinely cares […] He is a fair man, a good man. He will make a society where everybody gets a little bit" (McGee in Seymour, 1996: 6). McGee's contribution to the cause was expected to transmit this political enthusiasm to *Oasis*'s fans and consequently win Labour votes: "If I can get a million kids to vote Labour because Noel and Liam have endorsed them then I've done my bit" (6).

For lead guitarist Noel Gallagher, Tony Blair was the only hope Britain had after Margaret Thatcher, whom he accused of having destroyed the working class (Dower, *Live Forever* 2003). This optimism pervaded many of Britain's symbolic public events, as happened with the 1996 Brit Awards, from which it is worth recalling Gallagher's public support for the Labour candidate:

[73] As has been widely commented, *Oasis*'s song 'Don't Look Back in Anger' (1995) could be related to John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956), which makes reference to the youth culture of the 1950s and how disillusioned and frustrated working-class character Jimmy Porter struggles with the domestic conditions of his class.

> There are seven people in this room tonight who are giving a little bit of hope to young people in this country: that's me, Archer, Bonehead, Guigsy, Alan White, Alan McGee and Tony Blair, and if you've all got anything about you, you'll go up there and you'll shake Tony Blair's hand, man. He's the man! Power to the people! (Noel Gallagher in Dower, *Live Forever* 2003)

Noel Gallagher was particularly committed to the politics of his country: although he has often been associated with drug subculture and London nightlife, he was steadily involved in the analysis of British politics and the evolution of New Labour. His public declarations about his support or critique of Tony Blair's decisions—on taxes, fox hunting and Iraq—made him one of the most politically engaged pop stars of his time. Despite his early enthusiasm and support for the new Prime Minister, he soon regretted it. By 1998 he publicly retracted himself stating that attending the "Cool Britannia" party at Downing Street in 1997 was a mistake, as he had the impression that his presence there was only motivated to project the image of New Labour. After criticising Blair's anti-social measures (i.e. cutting single parent benefits), he stated: "When Tony Blair said he was courting the music business, idiots like me thought we could have a say, but it became a publicity stunt on his behalf" (*Daily Mail*, 1998: 26). In 1999, Gallagher attacked New Labour for being too conservative and for being similar to the Tories: "Nothing really changes does it? Same shit, different day. What was it: 'We're all middle-class now'. I find that really insulting. Being middle-class is just one step closer to topping yourself. It's just the most boring thing I could ever imagine" (Gallagher in Paton Walsh, 1999: 2). The musician's discontent with New Labour developed throughout the government's premiership. Gallagher's later contempt for Tony Blair was made explicit in different interviews and public statements in which he condemned Blair for his presidential style and his decision to participate in the Iraq war (BBC, 2007b).[74] Initially, he admitted, people of the music industry thought Blair would bring some hope: "We thought it was going to be John F. Kennedy and for a year or two it was" (2007), but in the end, they all felt a profound disenchantment.

Although Gallagher and his band—among other pop musicians—had been symbolic in the early support and later opposition to Blair's government, there were

[74] By the end of the New Labour years, some of the musicians who had helped Tony Blair reach Number 10 felt disillusioned and disappointed with his performance in office. Noel Gallagher admitted that Blair 'was now saddled with the Iraq War' and denied that 'there is anything left to vote for' (BBC, 2007b). He also suggested that the media 'made [Blair] into a president, no wonder he acts like one' (2007).

other significant manifestations within the musical sphere that released their disappointment with the Prime Minister. The music magazine ***New Musical Express*** (NME), a popular publication associated with the 1970s and 1980s British punk, published a controversial and best-selling issue in 1998 on purpose of Blair's first year in government. The magazine's cover-page title, "Ever Had the Feeling You've Been Cheated?" thoroughly described the disillusion of music and the arts with the early outcome of New Labour.[75] In this sense, the magazine became an emblematic representation that "Cool Britannia was turning against him [Blair]" (Midgley, 1998: 40). Author Bill Osgerby also declared that

> By the end of the 1990s the "Cool Britannia" bubble had burst. Disillusioned with what they saw as Labour's failure to deliver on election promises to help young people and the poor, the grandees of Britpop began to round on the government. (2004: 75)

Britpop felt betrayed by New Labour, all these bands had embraced the new government with hope and optimism, and they suddenly felt deceived by an apparent youth-friendly and free-minded government that had actually benefitted from and used the music industry to win elections. They felt that the Prime Minister "had betrayed the principles on which he was elected, and should no longer be regarded as an honorary member of the 'Cool Britannia' movement" (Simpson, 1998: 3). The magazine's main article, entitled "Betrayed: The Labour Government's War on You," declared that rock music had suddenly fallen out of love with New Labour; while musicians were initially enthusiastic about Blair's victory in 1997 and supported the government's cause, a year later some of these musicians condemned New Labour "as a warning that the New Labour honeymoon is over. That rock music's decades-old, instinctive and deep-seated pro-Labour sympathies have, in the past nine months, been chipped away to almost nothing" (*NME*, 1998a: 27). Expectations were initially optimistic, "after eighteen years of racism, homophobia, nationalism, xenophobia, arrogance, greed, sleaze and snobbery with violence […] the Tories were OUT!" (28). Tony Blair was young and his seemed the "first rock 'n' roll government" (28). However, as stated in the magazine, Blair's decisions, and his special relationship with Margaret Thatcher and Rupert Murdoch

[75] The paper's title "Ever had the Feeling You've Been Cheated?" refers to Jonny Rotten's—of Sex Pistols—famous quotation, which associates the angry joint expression of NME in 1998 to the transgressive punk rock of the 1970s in Britain.

revealed that none of the Labour reforms were made in the music industry's favour; on the contrary, they benefitted "the rich, the powerful, the established, the privileged and the reactionary" (28). These musicians' anger also blamed Blair for having used "Cool Britannia" to look cool:

> And, now that "our" party is in power, we've taken our eye off the ball, we've been suckerpunched. And it matters because *our* music, *our* culture, the collective sweat of our groovy brows has been bundled up and neatly repackaged and given a cute little brand name and is being used by New Labour spin doctors to give this hideously reactionary New Labour Government a cachet of radical credibility. A credibility of which it is utterly undeserving. (28)

Among the disenchanted pop stars of NME we can highlight *Oasis*'s manager Alan McGee, Bobby Gillespie of *Primal Scream*, Jarvis Cocker of *Pulp*, Ian Broudie of the *Lightning Seeds*, Ian Brown, and Tim Burgess of *The Charlatans*. Their main criticism lay on Blair's conservatism, as "he was a Tory in disguise" (*Birmingham Post*, 1998: 7) on "welfare to work, university tuition fees, curfews for under-18s and drugs decriminalisation" (Midgley, 1998: 40). Gillespie, for instance, said that "Thatcher was honest about her systematic destruction of the trade union movement and working class, Tony Blair isn't" (*NME*, 1998a: 30). McGee also complained about the government's measures on Welfare to Work, which forced musicians to take any job offer and prevented them from spending time to create (33). Moreover, Ian Brown affirmed that the Labour Party was a capitalist party and was doing nothing to resurrect all the services that the Tories had destroyed (30). To that, Martin Rossiter of *Gene* added that "by definition they are not a socialist party" (31). All in all, these musicians exposed their disappointment, a frustration that came from their feeling that Blair's initial commitment to the music industry deceived their expectations, as he used them in favour of his own career (Simpson, 1998: 3). In this respect, Steve Sutherland, NME editor, claimed that Blair "came across as concerned about their views when he needed their support but once he got to power he ceased to listen" (3).

Some of the most controversial music figures that had contributed to the NME issue also reacted against the government in different ways. Again music mogul Alan McGee, and *Chumbawamba* vocalist and anarchist musician—*enfant terrible*—Danbert Nobacon were two provocative examples of this rebellion. On the one hand, Alan McGee, after having been one of Blair's most loyal supporters, became one of his main

critics: in the beginning, he had contributed to Labour's campaign with a substantial donation to take the Conservatives out of power (McCabe, 1998: 10), and once in office, the government had appointed him advisor at the Creative Industries Task Force Unit, a unit that was established to promote creative industries (advertising, art, design, fashion, music, publishing and TV) as a nascent source of economic growth. However, his early enthusiasm was suddenly truncated by the government's reforms: it is said that McGee refused to appear with Employment Minister Andrew Smith because the "Welfare to Work program was 'gonna kill my business'" (in McCabe, 1998: 10). He eventually resigned as advisor of the Task Force Unit in 2000 for disagreement with the government (Osgerby, 2004: 76). On the other hand, Danbert Nobacon's controversial behaviour also represented the musicians' disdain for the government, as he "poured a pitcher of ice water on Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott" on behalf of single mothers, pensioners, workers, students, homeless and "all the underclass who are now suffering at the hands of the Labour government" (McCabe, 1998: 10).

By the end of the Blair years, the discontent in the music scene continued to increase. Although many different bands would reveal their disagreement with the British government, it is worth taking into consideration *The Guardian*'s list of the top protest songs against New Labour (Lynskey, 2007). These songs broadly covered a significant range of issues that the government had been most criticised for: they ridiculed Blair's anti-socialist modernisation, his disappointing affair with the pop industry, the widely criticised betrayal of party supporters, the crimes in the Iraq war, and Blair's alliance with Bush and his special relationship with the United States.

Among the songs mentioned on the list, perhaps the most relevant samples are represented, for instance, by Pulp's "Cocaine Socialism" (1998), which satirises Blair's utilisation of "Cool Britannia" and Britpop to project a modern image of himself, a "party" Prime Minister, a "superstar" that seduced drug subculture and "sniff socialists" to win voters (*Pulp*, 1998). According to a headline in the NME, Jarvis Cocker, *Pulp*'s singer, accused the Labour Party of "cocaine socialism" (*NME*, 1998b), as a modernising window dressing that brought popular singers to its side: "And we've waited such a long time / for the chance to help our own kind, so now / please come on and tow the party line / oh you owe it to yourself" (*Pulp*, 1998).

Chumbawamba's song "Tony Blair" (1999) parodies a type of 1950s retro American song to criticise Blair's betrayal of the Labour Party and its supporters, who felt deceived by his promises, and his new look: "You promised something new […]

But Tony now you date / all the girls that you used to hate / so I don't believe a single word you say" (*Chumbawamba*, 1999). Also, *Radiohead*'s "You and Whose Army" (2001) follows this same line of disenchantment with Blair. Although the song could have many different potential meanings, singer and writer Thom Yorke admitted it represented his disillusionment with Blair's government (Yorke, 2001). It seems that a constant reference to the "holy Roman Empire" reveals a political disaffection with governments and their aspirations of power, and maybe of war too: "You and whose army? / You and your cronies." Yet, at the same time, the song seems to carelessly challenge these aspirations: "Come on, come on… / come on if you think / you can take us all on" (*Radiohead*, 2001). Finally, George Michael's "Shoot the Dog" (2002) initiated a series of anti-American songs concerned with Blair's special relationship with Bush and his support for the Iraq war. Other songs that were critical of Blair in this direction were Dizzee Rascal's "Hold your Mouf" (2003), Elbow's "Snowball" (2005), Pet Shop Boys's "I'm with Stupid" (2006) and Muse's "Take a Bow" (2006), all of which attacked the war in Iraq (Lynskey, 2007).

In sum, the "Cool Britannia" years began with enthusiastic optimism in view that a young and dynamic Labour candidate socialised with those artistic and musical spheres that had revolved around marginalised circles of counter-culture during the previous decade. While winning supporters among intellectuals, popular culture and subculture, Tony Blair seemed to be the messianic leader that offered hope to all spheres of British society. Britpop and its bands, with *Oasis* at the lead, initially reacted with positivism and unconditional admiration for Tony Blair, but they soon reacted against the government as it frustrated their hopeful expectations. The music scene exerted an oppositional stand through many different manifestations—songs, public statements and the joint publication at the NME—which represent in this dissertation the cultural modes of resistance against the considered betrayal of the Labour government. In retrospect, musicians like Damon Albarn (*Blur*) and Louise Wener (*Sleeper*) declared that they had the intuition that New Labour's interest in the arts was all about image, and as such they felt deceived and disappointed (in Dower, *Live Forever* 2003).

It is also necessary to point out that, in reference to the methodological analysis of this dissertation, all the musicians addressed here have contributed to the intellectual representations of Blairism: they were involved in the politics of their country and

opposed, in different ways, Tony Blair's government. Given their profession and their social backgrounds, more often related to marginal spheres of counter-culture, they have traditionally been excluded from the authorised intellectual critique of social and political issues; they have been outsiders in the recognised intellectual and artistic community that is normally regarded with prestige and consideration. However, this dissertation aims to consider the significant role that rock/pop bands had in the political dissidence of Britain in terms of the functional criterion that it is used throughout this study to identify those oppositional forces and counter-hegemonic voices. Their public opposition to Blair's government, and their defence of the working class and the unprotected can legitimately acknowledge their cultural productions as intellectual responses to Blair's New Labour. I here join the continuing debate that questions high culture as the only reputed and prestigious artistic expression, and agree with critics such as Fredric Jameson or Umberto Eco that established contemporary societies as complex, culturally multi-layered and unhierarchical. Because intellectual elitism prevails, this study claims for acknowledgement of those popular culture products—like the Britpop of the 1990s—that being excluded from distinguished dissident intellectual spheres, still have a genuine place in the political struggles, and contribute to deconstruct twenty-first-century hegemonic discourses:

> In 1990 some commentators criticised this non-hierarchical approach to culture on the grounds that distinctions of quality—between good and bad art, between "serious" art and "mere" entertainment—were being blurred. A heated debate followed on television and in the press about the respective merits of great artists and entertainers (it was usually posed in terms of a stark, either/or choice between Mozart and Madonna, John Keats and Bob Dylan, rather than a both/and). The debate—a recurring phenomenon—revealed that, despite the supposed triumph of post-modern pluralism and relativism, hierarchical notions of culture persist and are still a source of anxiety and disagreement. The division which Theodor Adorno identified between high art and mass culture remains, despite many recent examples of convergence and overlap. Consequently it continues to be a site of cultural struggle and artistic opportunity. (Walker, 2001: 4-5)

Additionally, Foucault's theory of *Power/Knowledge* helps to broaden the awareness of who and why is elected as an authorised voice in possession of truth, which allows some consideration for other excluded manifestations that have exerted an equally valid dissenting function. The artists and pop bands selected here belong to those "disqualified and subjugated knowledges" that, according to Foucault, are

normally buried and disguised. While other more reputed or erudite intellectuals have traditionally been entitled to question governments and denounce injustices, these counter-culture figures are normally prejudiced against all kind of intellectual attention. In Foucauldian terms, it is necessary to question the legislations, discourses and organisations that classify the acknowledged truth, so as to deconstruct established beliefs and integrate other voices and other truths as respected responses to Blairism. Foucault's claims for an unhierarchical classification of knowledges entail a criticism of all those mechanisms that create truth through power, that is, through "the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth" (Foucault, 1980: 133). Also, Foucault's definition of the contemporary specific intellectual not only regards the excluded knowledges, but also considers all the new professionals that become politicised through their specific expertise. That is, new forms of activities can also be considered intellectually valid as they politically respond to the search of truth. Artists and musicians, in their specific fields of work, can legitimately function as specific intellectuals, using their ordinary activities and their "local scientific truth" to denounce injustice and participate in political struggles (129).

6.2 MID-TERM EVALUATIONS: FILMS AND FILMMAKERS

In the early 2000s, and after the first tenure of Blair in Number 10, many analysts reflected upon his recent legacy: many diverse texts and cultural products portrayed Blair's early outcome in perspective, and films were perhaps the most significant visual illustration of Blair's premiership. In agreement with some critics of Film Studies, it is necessary to consider film texts not only an aesthetic construct principally thought for entertainment, but also and most importantly, a powerful vehicle for reflecting society and shape ideas. The following analysis of the most relevant films of Blairism is an attempt to demonstrate that all cultural and artistic products, films in particular, are ideological artefacts in essence. Graeme Turner, in his book *Film as a Social Practice* (1988), dictated that film was a complex cultural product full of social and ideological significations: "It is now more or less accepted that film's function in our culture goes beyond that of being, simply, an exhibited aesthetic object" (Turner, 1999: 3). He went on to say: "Film is a social practice for its makers and its audience; in its narratives and

meanings we can locate evidence of the ways in which our culture makes sense of itself" (3). Therefore, film is an agent of construction of cultural, social and political significations, as well as an instrument through which cultural systems are represented. In this sense, and in line with Turner's argument, every film text is intrinsically ideological, "consciously or unconsciously, and the relationship between each text and its culture is traceable to ideological roots" (171). It is important to emphasise the unconscious power of cultural texts, when for instance, American critic Fredric Jameson defended that every cultural product conveyed a political meaning: that is what he called the "political unconscious," which

> conceives of the political perspective not as some supplementary method, not as an optional auxiliary to other interpretive methods current today […] but rather as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation. (Jameson, 2005: 2)

In other words, he called for a political interpretation of every text, and invited to "explore the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts" (5-6). For Jameson, there is no other alternative but to relate the text to its social and historical background: textual interpretation is always and ultimately political. Therefore, as we will see in some of the films selected for the examination of Blairism, some filmmakers denied any political bias in their films, and still, these films will be analysed as ideological products: the unconscious political significations that are present in these films demonstrate that "both the production and reception of film are framed by ideological interests, no matter how insistently this might be denied" (Turner, 1999: 171).

Therefore, the films included in this chapter are a symbolic collection of the filmic representations of Blair's politics. They constitute, first of all, a historical account of those relevant events that marked the rise and development of New Labour, and secondly, and most importantly, they conform a representation—and criticism—of Blair's rising concentration of power. The films will consequently be analysed according to the chronology of the events they refer to in order to show Blair's evolution in power, from the *Granita* deal in 1994 portrayed in Stephen Frears's film *The Deal* (2003), to Blair's first steps in government when his personality and leadership was consolidated, as represented in Frears's later film *The Queen* (2006). Blair's controversial alliance with the United States will be subsequently represented in Richard Loncraine's *The Special Relationship* (2010), which was again illustrated in

Armando Iannucci's film *In the Loop* (2009), being the latter the acclaimed director for his regarded political TV series *The Thick of It* (2005). Roman Polanski's *The Ghost Writer* (2010) would join those representations of the war dossier scandal and the mysterious death of WMD scientist David Kelly. Finally, Member of Parliament George Galloway, who was expelled from Blair's government and then momentarily became a filmmaker, initiated a fund raising campaign for his anti-Blair documentary film *The Killing of Tony Blair* (forthcoming, 2015), a representation of the harsh criticism against the government led by disenchanted Labour members.

As we will see in the following analysis, some of these films do not aim to perform an explicit disapproval of the government, but rather, to reveal a more subtle critical representation of some historic events with a glow of sympathetic humanism (*The Deal*, *The Queen*, *The Special Relationship*). Although their directors have claimed that these films lack a categorical critical analysis and that they seem to be more concerned about the historical representation of Blair's political practice and his consolidation as Prime Minister (Morgan, 2003; Frears 2003a; Frears, 2003b), I believe that Blair's image is subtly unfavourable, and there exists an indirect intention to reprove the politician's ambitions. A second group of films, however, constitute an example of the unequivocal satirical representations of Blair's government, and the steadily opposition that his decisions raised (*In the Loop*, *The Thick of It*, *The Killing of Tony Blair*, *The Ghost Writer*). They will contrastingly point out the negative mechanisms of contemporary British politics—as a critique of how elected governments operate behind the stage—in order to ultimately broaden the audience's awareness about the responsibility and accountability of power.

Director **Stephen Frears** and writer **Peter Morgan** have been the brains behind the award-winning films *The Deal* (2003) and *The Queen* (2006), and together with **Richard Loncraine**'s *The Special Relationship* (2010), they all conform the so much acclaimed Blair trilogy. These films represent three distant moments in the evolution of Tony Blair as Prime Minister, from his initial triumph loaded with optimism and political strategising (*The Deal*), to his gradual consolidation of power and leadership, first of all at the crisis of Diana's death (*The Queen*), and secondly, in Britain's later relationship with America (*The Special Relationship*).

The Deal is one of the first graphic representations of Blair's rise to power: it illustrates the story behind the political career of the Prime Minister, and how Blair was

finally elected leader of Labour in 1994 after negotiating with Gordon Brown for his retreat as leader candidate. The film introduces the Labour Party consecutive defeats during Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock's leaderships in the 1980s, and the ensuing urgent need to reform the party in order to win elections. Blair (Michael Sheen) and Brown (David Morrisey) are depicted as colleagues and partners in Parliament, and while they seem to maintain a good relationship, they both have very different backgrounds: while Blair, the new Labour incorporation, had no history in the party, Brown was considered a child prodigy and the future heir of the party leadership. However, and after John Smith's stroke, Brown's prudence to run for the leadership motivated Blair to hasten events: "Our modernisation needs to be radical," he says, "We'll carry on the process of changing and reforming the Labour party to make sure our ideas and organization fit the age we live in" (Frears, *The Deal* 2003c). His personality and his charisma, his ideas and speeches begin to penetrate the party's conscience, and Peter Mandelson and Neil Kinnock soon realise that Blair might be a better candidate than Brown: "He's ambitious" Mandelson states (2003c). After Smith's death, Blair is seen as the ideal candidate, and in view that his rising opposition to Brown might lead to internal divisions, Blair finally proposes Brown a deal: he will run for election, and Brown would succeed him in a prospective second Labour term.

The Queen also shows the evolution of the young moderniser Tony Blair (Michael Sheen) who arrives at Downing Street surrounded by glamour and popular support. Briefly after his political triumph in 1997, Princess Diana dies in a car crash, and in view that the Crown prefers to keep the matter private, it is the Prime Minister who fights for a public mourning—understanding the general mood of pessimism—and against the Queen's (Helen Mirren) wishes. The film emphasises Blair's evolution, how he eventually becomes a strong character, with capacity for leadership, and ultimately saves the Queen from popular criticism. Despite Blair and the Queen's initial disharmony, in the end there is an implicit glimpse of mutual affection and sympathy.

Stephen Frears has been often regarded as the film director of British social condition. *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) was one of his most acclaimed achievements and he has adapted this and other social screenplays by Hanif Kureishi. In line with studies that establish filmic narratives as a valid analysis of cultural and social aspects, Frears, together with film writer Peter Morgan, continued this social function within an upper-class context in the Blair trilogy project: *The Deal* and *The Queen* were an attempt to portray relevant political events in contemporary Britain. Although there was

an emphasis in representing the characters involved from a more human perspective, and showing the privacy of politics through humanised politicians, there was also a subtle intention of uncovering Blair's early aspirations and ambitions. On the one hand, Frears and Morgan have stated in numerous occasions that their real intention was never a political critique. Morgan's initial idea for *The Deal*, for example, was to represent the unhealthy relationship between Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, but, as the writer has admitted, his purpose was not to write a "cynical" film: "I'm not interested in making any judgements whatsoever on their policies or the direction in which they're taking the Labour Party" (Morgan, 2003). He went on to say: "This isn't a story about the betrayal of Labour's socialist values, the price that Labour has paid in getting into office or what price Labour are prepared to pay to keep themselves in power" (2003).

In this direction, Frears has also admitted that his intention when filming *The Deal* was to be neutral and respectful with Labour voters: "I was determined the film would not allow people to feed their prejudices. That was the main thing" (Frears, 2003a). Pressure from the media to make the filmmaker confess any hidden political bias has been bluntly contested by saying that "the film is rather serious, sober and straightforward" (Frears, 2003b). As for *The Queen*, it has been equally regarded as apolitically biased, and although the real-life characters are always easy "satirical targets," the actors had to "go deep enough to create moments of pathos and empathy" (Martin, 2006). The characterisation of the Queen, for example, stemmed from curiosity about who this human being really was (Guillen, 2006). For Frears, it was a challenge to make a serious film about these characters, as it is "so easy to make them look ridiculous and show them to be dreadful" (2006).

On the other hand, and despite these filmmakers' interest in presenting their films as neutral and uncritical, there prevailed the awareness that these films dealt with politically sensitive events—as TV sponsors were very cautious with the films' historical approach for fear to potential controversy or political exposure (Wells, 2003). In the case of *The Deal*, Morgan's representation of the Blair-Brown relationship unmasks their open secret rivalry, despite the government's attempts to pretend otherwise. Telling the personal drama behind the curtains, the film focuses on a universal and ordinary story about professional jealousy: the seducer gains promotion, "while the other didn't but should have done" (Morgan in Gritten, 2003: 6). The bright and hard-working Brown is set aside by a young strategist, Tony Blair, emphasising,

therefore, "Brown's heartbreak" following the betrayal of his supporters—Peter Mandelson (6). There seems to be a beneficial image for Brown, and a subtle criticism of Blair's ambition and his "machinations;" the film debilitates the government's image by revealing its inner conflicts, "despite the Prime Minister's desperation to please" (Adams, 2003: D1). Thus, the portrayal of both characters borders caricature: Brown, for instance, is presented as an intellectual, a generator of ideas and faithful to the party's socialist principles, whereas Blair is "a shallow and devious opportunist, whose slippery campaigning for party leader before John Smith was even buried outmanoeuvred the more scrupulous Gordon Brown" (Portillo, 2003). For former Conservative MP Michael Portillo, "Blair had charisma, communication skills, a family and humour," and this together with his "opportunism in seizing the leadership" helped him put Labour at the national scene, which consequently emphasised the decadent state of the Labour Party in the pre-Blair years and the urgent need to "reconnect with mainstream opinion" (2003).

Similarly, *The Queen* follows this representation of a young and opportunist Blair who takes advantage of the circumstances to overcome institutional challenges and resurge as the rightful leader of the nation. The film is a story about ambition, about power and its challenges, and although its makers did not admit political references, there were subtle attempts to denounce, first of all, Blair's opportunism, and secondly, his analogous devotion for a traditional institution like the Monarchy. On the one hand, the film emphasises Blair's ambitions and pragmatism taking advantage of the Monarchy's passivity for his own sake by seizing "the opportunity to enhance his popularity" (Fuller, Graham 2006). As Deirdre Gilfedder maintains, "this leaves a big gap open for Blair and his strategists to grab the limelight and pummel political mileage out of the Royal Family's failures" (Gilfedder, 2007). It is, therefore, a story about manipulation of public opinion to gain visible power—before the British people—and *real* power, by influencing and manipulating the Queen's actions: "Ultimately, this is a story of spin, the control of public opinion not through spreading disinformation but rather through setting a *mood*, the most winning emotion" (Martin, 2006). The "shift in power" is evident when the monarchy is unable to respond to the people's needs, and instead, the Prime Minister takes up the leading role, which can be interpreted as the rising power of the Prime Minister and the media in contemporary society, challenging, consequently, "the British tradition" (Gilfedder, 2007). On the other hand, Blair's sympathetic respect for the figure of the Queen and their final mutual understanding is

also an ironic representation of a young moderniser who, contrastingly, identifies himself with the Queen's conservatism: "He comes to sympathise not only with the Queen as an ageing individual stuck in her ways, but also with the non-modern values she represents" (Martin, 2006).

Therefore, although Frears and Morgan have both admitted that their films were never politically prejudiced, it seems that there exists a subtle critical representation against the figure of Tony Blair. In this sense, an evident political reading can be made: following Turner and Jameson's arguments that every cultural text conveys political meanings and is intimately attached to the social, cultural and historical circumstances in which it is born, I would like to emphasise that political connotations do exist in these films, despite the denials of their filmmakers. Films perform, consciously or unconsciously, a social function, and they not only represent but also help construct ideological significations, social values and political critiques. Moreover, Jameson's concept of the "political unconscious" again contributes to the need of interpreting and analysing cultural products from a political, social and historical perspective, even though their more explicit meanings or the authors' declarations show otherwise. As he emphasises in his preface to *The Political Unconscious* (1981), it is necessary to prioritise the interpretation of texts, that is, the silences and the unknowns of every cultural or literary text (1983: 9), as well as discovering the "*ideological analysis*" (12) "of the unconscious and of desire, of representation, of history, and of cultural production, around the all-informing process of narrative which I take to be […] the central function or *instance* of human mind" (13). *The Deal* and *The Queen* are two examples of how unconscious political connotations are present in cultural products, and here I join those arguments that state that every cultural text conveys ideological significations despite the author's intentions.

However, and despite the filmmakers' insistence on their departure from critical connotations in these films, they have both revealed a personal aversion towards the Prime Minister, and have consequently contributed to the generalised atmosphere of criticism of Tony Blair. Frears, for instance, pointed out: "'The truth is I can't bear him any more,' Frears told one German publication. 'Two movies about him, that should be enough. By now the man acts like an emetic on me'" (in Jarvis, 2009). In a later interview he also stated that "he would happily witness the execution of Tony Blair, 'but with my eyes closed' […] 'Social democracy is finished,'" (in Fraser, Nick 2010).

In this sense, Frears publicly condemned New Labour's performance and the continuation of growing inequalities under Blair's government: "For me, the politics of the last 30 years haven't been very sympathetic. I didn't like Mrs Thatcher and I didn't like New Labour. […] Everywhere you look, you're confronted by unfairness, which seems to me ridiculous" (Frears, 2009: 37). For Frears, as he declared in another interview, Blair "was so skilful at abusing power […] He just wasn't a very decent man" (in Torrance, 2009: b2).

After *The Deal* and *The Queen*, *The Special Relationship* was the last film of the trilogy. It covers the space between Blair's modernisation of New Labour—an analogous transformation following Clinton's New Democrats—towards the Prime Minister's consolidation in power once in Downing Street, which leads Blair to strengthen its alliance with America and influence international affairs like the Kosovo war in 1999. The film shows Blair's (Michael Sheen) contradictions when presenting himself as a pro-European, and at the same time, desperately prioritising his union to Clinton (Dennis Quaid), a caricature of a brother-like relationship where a young and inexperienced Blair is trying to follow America's political pace. By the end of the film, Blair gains experience, determination and power, and as a consequence of Clinton's crisis at the Lewinsky scandal, Blair elects himself as advisor and protector: "We stand shoulder to shoulder, I can call him a friend and I'll be there to support him" (Loncraine, *The Special*…, 2010). The significant end introduces a recently elected George W. Bush who is again Blair's best ally, showing the continuity of this special relationship.

Like the previous two films of this trilogy, *The Special Relationship* was not meant to be a political film. As Morgan and Frears had done before, director Richard Loncraine—responsible for other historical adaptations such as *Richard III* (1995)—rejected any political engagement when filming the story, as he mentioned in an interview: "It's certainly a story, as the title says, about relationships. I'm not a very political animal" (in Fienberg, 2010). Loncraine also argued that his prudence also came from HBO restrictions to make the film politically correct (2010).[76] Yet, he has emphasised that the importance of this story was to show the precedents for Iraq, and why Blair unconditionally followed Bush into this conflict, which was, in Loncraine's opinion, one of Blair's greatest mistakes (Loncraine, 2012).

[76] HBO, or Home Box Office is an American TV channel that sponsored the film, together with the British BBC and the Rainmark Films Productions.

However, and following the two preceding films, *The Special Relationship* maintains an inferred criticism of Blair's ambition, his political rise, and the shift in power with those who nurtured and tutored him. Blair started his political career inspired by Clinton's New Democrats: the American was his mentor and the one who introduced him in political pragmatism. Shortly after his electoral triumph, Blair strengthened his position, and gradually overcame his *maestro* taking control of world politics. The film title suggests that the special relationship between the UK and the US was also a personal relationship between their leaders, yet, as the character performing Mandelson states, "all political friendship is strategic and conditional" (Loncraine, *The Special*…, 2010). Blair is again the opportunist, whose "shoulder to shoulder" slogan masks his messianic ambitions to change the world and to be "in the room when the big decisions are made, rather than outside" (2010). The film captures "the back-room strategizing and shrewd media gamesmanship of a politician's rise to power" (Goldstein, 2008: E1). Blair's friendship with Clinton, whether sincere or not, was never unconditional and never non-political, as "he also relishes being the confidant of the leader of the world's last superpower" (Stanley, 2010). In the end, he establishes himself the moral conscience and challenges Clinton's prudent position in Kosovo; as happened before with Brown and the Queen, there is once again a shift in power with the American President, which determined Blair's capacity to achieve his ambitions and be an unhesitating and compelling leader.

The Blair trilogy has been characterised by a subtle adverse image of the Prime Minister despite the filmmakers' declarations that their films were apolitical. However, their directors, such as Stephen Frears, have personally condemned the legacy of New Labour, and have subsequently joined the critical spheres of British culture that opposed their government. The second group of films included in this dissertation are distinctively more accurate in introducing critical connotations to the style of Blair's government. Reputed filmmakers such as Armando Iannucci, Roman Polanski, and dissenting Labour MP George Galloway aimed to awaken interest and awareness of the negative side of politics, making their films function as reminders of the weaknesses of Blair's government throughout his premiership. In this sense, these straightforwardly critical films perform the social function that critics such as Turner defend: film always functions as a social practice, and there is a need to consider its value "as a means of producing and reproducing cultural significance" (Turner, 1999: 48). In the dialectical

contest between those who believe that film is an ideological vehicle on a large scale, and those who defend the relative impact of film on the spectators, there are some critics that argue that film texts do produce political meanings, as their function is to reinforce or subvert a particular ideology (Lapsley and Westlake, 2006: xiv). It is therefore clear the social function of cinema: its critical role aims to deconstruct pre-established beliefs by eliciting social awareness and rising critical consciousness. Filmmakers such as Iannucci, Polanski and Galloway follow this type of committed movement that directly aims to have an effect on the audience, contributing therefore to the construction or deconstruction of a specific ideology, that of Blair's manipulative discourse on Iraq. These films are examples of how cinema functions as a political instrument for social awareness and social change: these filmmakers aim to denounce the intricacies of governments' real interests when they publicly defend their honest intentions.

Satirist by nature, writer and filmmaker **Armando Iannucci** is well known for his TV comedy shows where different characters of public life (i.e. Tony Blair, Princess Diana, David Cameron, Ed Miliband) have been parodied. It will be, therefore, this director who would create a satirical illustration of contemporary politics with his awarded political TV series *The Thick of It* (2005—2012). Although the series did not explicitly refer to the Blair government, its critique of the internal mechanisms of British politics inevitably established analogous associations with the Blair years, echoing well-known scandals or events. This style has been said to resemble the Thatcher-inspired TV series *Yes, Minister*.

On the series, Malcolm Tucker, played by Peter Capaldi, is the government's director of Communications and Strategy (Alastair Campbell), an unscrupulous spin-doctor who manipulates and controls every single governmental strategy with the aim of projecting a specific and favourable image of the government among the citizenry. Action takes place within the Ministry of Social Affairs, led by Minister Hugh Abbot who works in turn with two advisors, Glenn Cullen and Ollie Reeder. Their adventures revolve around political spin and lobbying, and how Tucker's orders condition the Minister's autonomy, thus parodying these politicians' priorities: the characters seem to be mainly concerned about headlines, about media reports and about leaking policies to newspapers. This consequently results against their initial intentions as they fail to look serious politicians; despite their efforts and attempts to preserve an immaculate image, they eventually act according to their emotional instabilities: their infantile behaviour

ruins their speeches, reunions and public appearances, and when they are required to provide new policies—in order to satisfy their voters—they are simply able to come across with comic and childish initiatives.

With Blair's consolidation in power during his second term, and after his determination to deal with Brown, with the Queen, or with Clinton—as shown in the films mentioned above—his capacity to control events around New Labour became one of those idiosyncratic features of his government. Although spin and lobbying had germinated during the previous era, it would be the Blair government the one which took government-media relations further on, to the point of characterising the New Labour age by media manipulation and control of the public opinion. Iannucci's *The Thick of It* would caricature this reality, and although the series might generate some incredulity because of its surrealist and absurd adventures, the director has often mentioned that its success precisely comes from the realism that underlies the stories. In this respect, Andrew Marr wondered, for instance, that if this satirical representation was actually realistic or "accurate," "we had better get ourselves a different democracy. And the truth is that, while the show exaggerates, there is enough reality in it to make any insider queasy" (Marr, 2005: 22). This is perhaps the real effect of the series, it might not change politics, but it makes the audience think and judge politicians from another perspective, which might ultimately inspire a change for transparency. In this sense, Iannucci admitted that his series may show the radical side of politics: "Watching the shows again made me realise how revolutionary they must have appeared to viewers when they were first broadcast" (Iannucci, 2005). His intention was to cause an impact on the audience by showing how politics really is, and how "Media coverage has such a dominant hold over political life that appearance can often take greater precedence over substance" (2005). As he later declares, "I want people to know that we've spent a lot of time trying to get the feel for the atmosphere right, so that people can go away thinking, 'That's what it's like'" (in Kundnani, 2009). Talking to Andrew Rawnsley, Iannucci explained his intention when making *The Thick of It*, and he stressed that his purpose was to show the gap between what people learn about politics and what politics really is; he criticised that politicians and governments take pains to show themselves as knowledgeable and powerful people, when this is just window dressing to remain in power:

> We see these grand looking buildings down Whitehall. So you assume the people within them kind of know what they're doing with power. And part of the comedy is going through those doors and discovering that they don't really. Although it's a big job, it's actually little people. (Iannucci in Rawnsley, 2012)

While targeting at the politicians' incompetence, Iannucci has again declared that his second critical concern was to show the concentration of power in some few people, thus diminishing the actual significance of democracy. The series caricatures some powerless ministers and advisors whose function is merely a commercial image, and those in real power are an invisible and non-existent Prime Minister and his merciless Director of Communications. In this sense, Iannucci's inspiration came from

> an idea of Blair as "someone with a domineering, centralised control over government" with "a group of bully boys, the enforcers, who would visit departments and just tell the minister this is what you say, this is your newest line to take, this is your view." (In Rawnsley, 2012)

Iannucci's critical opinion about contemporary politics reveals his disappointment; he confesses that "this time around I've kind of come at it with a feeling that the whole system just doesn't work. And it's primarily because we have a generation of politicians who have done nothing apart from politics" (2012). In this respect, Rawnsley, who has been in turn very critical about the Blair administration, responds to Iannucci that the filmmaker's view about contemporary British politics is perhaps negatively unrealistic and generalises "the worst dimensions of politics" illustrating a profession apparently "populated only by fools and knaves" (2012). However, whether generalised or not, the considered shameful adventures of *The Thick of It* reflect some of the realities of Downing Street—identified as such by the real protagonists—and they cause, as mentioned above, an alarming impact on the audience—and voters too—when they are displayed. In this respect, an editorial of *The Observer* pointed out that it was surprising to see how much of *The Thick of It* actually mirrors reality: "When a chief whip on a bike is caught behaving out of order, when a prime minister is accidentally heard calling someone a bigot, or when a chancellor of the exchequer is spotted fare-dodging on a train, there is only one thing to say: 'It is just like *The Thick of It*!'" (*Observer*, 2012). Even for some, the TV series has been "alarmingly prescient" when portraying fictional events that "were followed the next

day by a real-life equivalent" such as the government proposal to cut school breakfast clubs (Heritage, 2012).

Iannucci's similar intention of provoking the audience also encouraged the making of *In the Loop* (2009), his Iraq-inspired film and also the continuation of the TV series *The Thick of It*. On this occasion, a clumsy Minister leaks to the media a "foreseeable" attack on the Middle East, and Director of Communications Malcolm Tucker (Peter Capaldi) is in charge of preventing the government's image from collapse, this being the reason why he eventually orders to edit a war dossier and make the invasion more attractive. The action takes place in America, where the allies, a committee of British and American top officials, strategise to make the attack possible. The comedy shows cultural contrasts between British and American politics, yet its main aim is to parody how powerful America is, and how "arrogant" but "powerless" is the British counterpart (Adams, 2009). While the confident American government makes decisions, the British team is inexperienced, clumsy, infantile, and insecure. Tucker and his team only want to follow America's path in the Middle East, which induces the Americans to patronise the British and take advantage of their support.

Iannucci's representation depicts the intricacies of the government and some insecure politicians who are unable to make the decisions they really want, or say what they ought to. The manipulation of some, the incompetence of others, and the passivity of other few lead to the making of the Iraq war: "The British-American push to war involves dubious, possibly cooked intelligence, and voices of dissent inside both governments are silenced and suborned" (Scott, 2009: C1). The film is an attempt to show how history—and especially the events that took place in Iraq—originated as the consequence of human weaknesses, and of a sum of small circumstances that grow and eventually seem unstoppable:

> So along came Iraq, and I thought, "Bingo, great". I knew I didn't want to do a film that was set in the buildup to the invasion of Iraq, but I wanted to take all those elements of people not quite being brave enough to stand up and say "This must stop." (In Adams, 2009)

When Iannucci researched into the events that eventually led to the invasion of Iraq, and learned "about all the dysfunction and competition" within the government, he also thought that the whole story was a "farce" proper of a film (Iannucci in Lyall, 2009). For Iannucci, as he explains in an interview, the Iraq war seemed to be a

grotesque, uncontrollable and undemocratic action that approached fictional reality, and this was the reason why the filmmaker found comedy a suitable genre to parody the surrealism of events:

> I found comedy in the Blair government trying to control the agenda so much that it became uncontrollable. There was a certain amount of anger in the Iraq war and the fact that these decisions were made without any consultation, on the basis of evidence that turned out to be completely fictional. I thought that would be extremely funny, if it weren't so tragic. (In Radish, 2012)

In another interview, Iannucci confessed that the film "grew out of his anger and frustration about the Iraq war," and he continued: "In my head I was thinking, even if there are weapons of mass destruction, this is wrong" (in Kundnani, 2009). He has always been interested in politics, and this film "seems to be in part an expression of Iannucci's disillusionment with Tony Blair, about whom he was initially enthusiastic" (2009). He acknowledged that he was fascinated about Blair winning elections, but just before he was elected in 1997, Iannucci "became increasingly suspicious" when he attended a Labour Party conference and realised that Blair was just a very good actor (2009).

In sum, Iannucci's representations of contemporary politics have used comedy as an intellectual strategy to debilitate and delegitimise Blair's government: his films become, therefore, a social practice, a critical instrument to deconstruct ideological meanings, and to fight back to power by promoting social awareness and political change. While politicians take great pains in appearing as knowledgeable and powerful leaders projecting a voter-friendly image, the filmmaker uses humour in order to attenuate the government's authority and dismantle their arguments. According to Anthony O. Scott, in Iannucci's films "the people in whose hands momentous decisions rest are shown—convincingly and in squirming detail—to be duplicitous, vindictive, small-minded and untrustworthy" (Scott, 2009: C1). For Iannucci, governments' decisions are made out of human insecurities, ambition, and manipulation, all of which puts into question the validity, stability and justice of their power. Therefore, Iannucci and his denunciation of what happens behind the stage conforms another cultural product of the counter-hegemonic manifestations during the Blair years, and his criticism and political satire join the previous cultural voices that denounced the making and outcome of Blairism. His films consequently are a demonstration of how art

becomes political and influential: by making public the private affairs of the Blair government, Iannucci's films turn into a political instrument for raising awareness.

A different perspective can be found in **Roman Polanski**'s *The Ghost Writer* (2010). This controversial Polish filmmaker is the director of the British-German adaptation of Robert Harris's novel *The Ghost* (2007), which has already been analysed in chapter four of this dissertation. Starred by Pierce Brosnan and Ewan McGregor, the film was an awarded production in which Polanski, a polemic director responsible for other historical and literary representations (*Macbeth* 1971, *The Pianist* 2002, *Oliver Twist* 2005), depicts a British Prime Minister involved in a mysterious political conspiracy. Although not directly mentioned, the film clearly refers to the Iraq war—which motivated war crime allegations against the Prime Minister—and the mysterious suicide of WMD scientist Dr David Kelly, that inspired accusations upon Blair's government for his supposed murder.

Although some voices such as Andrew O'Hehir state that Polanski's intention was not meant to be political, here I include his film as part of those representations that symbolise a straightforward denunciation of Blair's government, for *The Ghost Writer* is a story about political corruption and clearly contains political and ideological significations. In this sense, O'Hehir defended that although "Harris' novel is clearly meant as a scathing indictment of Blair […] Polanski isn't much interested in the story's political ramifications" (O'Hehir, 2010), and Harris himself also admitted that Polanski's film "is not a glib liberal left take on it […] I think the film is quite even-handed" (Harris in Mr Beaks, 2010). In this line of criticism, other critics have pointed out that despite Blair's depiction as "selfish, vindictive and opportunist," the film does not deepen into greater political themes; the film is not a "cynical work," and yet, there are some details that emphasise the need to be inquisitive, to look for justice and to resist power (Walsh, 2010).

Despite those critics that elude political responsibilities in Polanski's film, there are other voices that argue that not only *The Ghost Writer* is a political film, but also that Polanski is a political character: although he is not a left-thinker and normally detaches himself from concrete ideological beliefs, just "consider the corruption, confusion, alienation, claustrophobia, cynicism, and sense of overwhelming powerlessness of the individual, that pervades all of his films" (Kaufman, 2011). *The Ghost Writer* is a good example of how an arrogant and unaccountable Prime Minister

is accused of collaborating with the United States' illegal machinations when extraditing and torturing some alleged terrorists. The obscure relationship between Polanski and the US, a reciprocal act of accusations in the name of morality, feeds the paradox: justice and truth are eventually political constructs used at the service of particular, and sometimes contradictory, ideologies. Both *The Ghost Writer* and Polanski embody the canon of postmodern, contradictory and complex characterisation of modern personalities, the line between morality and immorality is too thin, victim and executioner play interchangeable roles, and none of them owns absolute truth and absolute moral impunity. Film critic Niles Schwartz, in his in-depth analysis of Polanski's film, underlines that "in this world there are no good guys or bad guys. There is only moral cloudiness, uncertainty, and a sequence of postures for official documentation and public record, onto which the narrative of history is rendered" (Schwartz, 2011). Polanski's *The Ghost Writer* exposes in this way a contest of truths: the official truth according to which a British Prime Minister unconditionally supports the United States in defence of universal justice, and the excluded, unknown and secret version of history in which, according to the film, the British government is controlled by the CIA, and Kelly's death seems to be a murder resulting from an obscure conspiracy.

According to Schwartz, the symbolic representation and analysis of reality is a key theme in this film. For the critic, "the bizarre, hyperreal quality of the film's production" emphasises the contrast of realism with artificial, surreal scenes: "It effectively feeds into the image's strangeness, a hyperreality, something that is not authentically real, but more like the clone of some reality that has an indeterminate origin" (Schwartz, 2011). Therefore, in order to complete this argument, I consider necessary to provide a political reading of Polanski's touch of surrealism in *The Ghost Writer*: on the one hand, and although the film is rooted in a realistic historical background—that of the Iraq war—it also conveys a fictionalised and surrealist plot of a British Prime Minister who is a secret agent of the CIA. This fictionalised version of history parallels the surrealism of real life events, where a supposedly democratic government manipulates intelligence reports (the war dossier) provoking the obscure and mysterious suicide of WMD expert David Kelly, who was, in turn, aware of the government's falsities. The use of surrealism turns into a political strategy to justify that reality is not what it seems, and that reality is artificially made by those in power. Similarly, the construction of history is again a surreal and artificial construction. As

Lelaine Bonine defends, Polanski's film questions the objectivity of history making, and deepens into the discussion of how historiographical narratives deal with "representation, omission, (in)fidelity, 'truth,' remembrance, objectivity, and, most importantly, the creation of myth" (Bonine). *The Ghost Writer* entangles, therefore, a search of the processes of history writing, and how realism and surrealism conflict for legitimacy. History is made out of "real objects" and turns into a legend or myth "written by subjects—subjects in power, and subjects coerced by power" (Bonine). Bonine goes on to say:

> The *Ghost Writer* reminds us that History is composed subjectively, calling for us to pull back the misleading mask of objectivity History often assumes: to expose the subjectivity that has always been hidden in the shadows of its composition by those with the power to control it. (Bonine)

In the film, there is a fight to control the Prime Minister's memoirs, to control the official versions of the story and its consequent legacy, that is, the construction of history and what it will remain. Those unofficial accounts are excluded in order to reproduce patterns of power, which "is also a fight for the continued legitimating of the West's political power through historiography" by preserving an immaculate image of the powerful, and omitting their crimes (Bonine). Therefore, there also exist political significations in the use of truth, and the official accounts of truth. Schwartz examines Polanski's intriguing atmosphere in which nobody can be trusted (Schwartz, 2011). There is a persistent motto throughout the film that establishes lying and mystery as a necessary ingredient for nourishing the political conspiracy. The different characters—from the perfectly inaccessible Prime Minister, to his wife Ruth Lang, to CIA agent and professor Paul Emmett—untrustworthy of "the ghost" and the spectator's confidence show that everybody has something to hide. This could perfectly have an ideological reading: nobody—the government, WMD scientists, journalists—can be trusted, the network of interests behind the stage is complex and corrupt, and truth is always contested, the government's official version of truth is reproduced, while the secrecies, and illegalities of politics are disguised: "There is a difference between political, recorded, or 'public' truth and any kind of actual, natural, or 'private' truth" (2011). Those characters that attempt to reveal the private side of politics are excluded, repressed and sometimes murdered. Only manipulated truth is what remains, whereas other objective facts are omitted and disqualified. The duality of truth and the battle to

make one of these accounts open to public recognition is exemplified in this film. The CIA fights to keep its power in secret, and those who question that power and aim to denounce it, die. The end of *The Ghost Writer* concludes with the Ghost's assumed death at a car crash, thus establishing the supremacy of the American power and the fact that truth will be never known (Schwartz, 2011). This is Polanski's political act: truth will never be known about Iraq, about Blair's role in the manipulation of the war dossier, about the death of David Kelly. Those who fight to bring the truth to light are punished, being truth eventually politicised.

Therefore, despite those critics that label *The Ghost Writer* as an apolitical film (O'Hehir, 2010), it is clear that it actually contains important political readings. It is essential to consider Polanski a political product of his time, as well as his creations, such as the film here analysed, which are again ideological constructs. The film is a representation of the multiplicity of the concept of truth, and how different versions of truth end up being widely known and accepted, whereas others remain untold. Polanski's film demonstrates how cinema helps to conceptualise contemporary reality, and how film texts theorise about the construction of history, the official accounts of politics and the excluded untold stories. The film contributes to the dialogue of truth and politics, to the battle between the acknowledged truths and the excluded truths that Foucault explained in his *Power/Knowledge* theory. As previously stated in the analysis of Harris's novel, these are the erudite knowledge and the disqualified/subjugated knowledges: the former comprehends those versions of history that are recognised and legitimised by power (Britain's support for the United States in the battle to preserve universal justice), and the latter conveys those repressed accounts, "the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation" (Foucault, 1980: 81) and that are excluded in the construction of history (Britain's collaboration in America's illegal machinations and torture of suspects). There is therefore a double effect in the relation between power and knowledge:

> The exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information. […] The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power. (51-52)

Knowledge and truth are created and established by those in power, and those coerced by power; similarly, in a reciprocal need, power needs reputed knowledge to legitimise its existence and its control:

> Knowledge and power are integrated with one another, and there is no point in dreaming of a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power. […] It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power. (52)

America's attempts to control secret illegalities (the supposed conspiracy of the CIA controlling the British government in *The Ghost Writer*) originate in its interest to control the official versions of history and to control the stories that remain. In this direction, America's discourse of making war in the name of universal truth and universal justice is a manner of legitimising its actions so as to ultimately remain in power. *The Ghost Writer* is eventually an example of how Foucault's notion of truth and power are reproduced in contemporary societies; the film functions as a critical response to official discourses and conveys an attempt to deconstruct the reputed and erudite history that the West creates. The film analyses how truth and knowledge are ultimately politicised to reproduce power patterns and relations.

In a different line of criticism but also focused on the Iraq war, controversial MP **George Galloway**, expelled from the Labour government for his opposition to the war, initiated a fund-raising campaign so as to make the protest documentary film *The Killing of Tony Blair* (forthcoming, 2015). At present and while writing this dissertation, the film is in post-editing stages and will be released in March 2015 at the SXSW film festival in Austin, Texas. However, it is necessary to include this film as one of most straightforward examples of the opposition to Blair and the sharp criticism that his government raised even within the members of his own party. Galloway in particular has been a "volcanic and sharp-witted politician" (Morgan, 2012) whose anxious ambition to make of himself a public voice against the American rule and his own British government turned him into a controvertible dissident figure during the Blair years. He has been considered "one of Westminster's hardest working and most determined campaigners" (2012), and his blunt and politically incorrect utterances have labelled him as a polemical activist.

Among all kinds of reproaches to Tony Blair, Galloway has been particularly critical of the Iraq war, and this is the reason why he ultimately organised the making of

his protest documentary. As he expresses in the film presentation, his documentary is about "the Blair years. Years of war and plunder, death and destruction, corruption and disillusion" (Galloway, 2013). The film is an attempt to depict Blair's legacy, from his "killing of the Labour party," his affair with the rich and the powerful, and the different wars he was responsible for, as Galloway explains:

> We are going to uncover some new truths about the killing he has already done, how he killed the Labour party, how he killed a million people in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere, and how he made a real killing out of doing both. (2013)

In this sense, in an e-mail interview I personally made to Richard Thynne, member of the team making the film, he mentioned the reasons to produce this documentary film: first of all, Thynne stressed that Blair's government continued Margaret Thatcher's political legacy, so the film aims to show how he followed Thatcher's conservatism, "even though he was supposed to represent the British Labour Party. He almost single-handedly turned the Labour Party into a second Conservative Party, therefore ruining the prospects for British working-class people for over a generation" (Thynne, 2013). Secondly, and most importantly, their main criticism will focus on the Iraq war, which was, in their view, "wholly illegal" (2013). Galloway has often confronted Blair and Bush for their messianic attitude to shape the world according to their cultural or religious standards, consequently killing innocent citizens (Galloway in Hartmann, 2005). For Galloway, the war in Iraq brought, as he said, catastrophic results and a million people dead, which justified the right of the Iraqi people "to resist the illegal occupation of their country" (Galloway in BBC, 2006).

In sum, Galloway's criticism, together with Iannucci's satire and other filmmakers' representations, analysed—and criticised—Blair's rising concentration of power, and his development as Prime Minister from the *Granita* Deal in 1994 to his later influence in world politics and the making of the Iraq war. The chronological representation of Blair's second term in these visual products shows the latent opposition that his decisions and his ruling style raised. Stephen Frears's *The Deal* and *The Queen*—by portraying Blair's beginnings—provide some justification for Blair's growing influential power, which is demonstrated in his later alliance with America, as shown in Richard Loncraine's *The Special Relationship*. It will be Armando Iannucci's satires, in his TV series *The Thick of It* and his later film *In the Loop*, the first straightforward filmic critique of Blairism, where political behaviour is parodied in

order to dismantle a window-dressing authority and its immune decisions. Polanski's *The Ghost Writer* constitutes a theoretical analysis of the legitimacy of the government's discourses, and finally, Galloway's documentary will complete a sharp denunciation of what he called Blair's crimes.

It is again necessary to analyse the role of these filmmakers as part of the intellectual opposition against Blair. Their visual illustrations have shown the inner mechanisms of Blair's government as clear and open attacks on the considered shameful acts of the elected government. As Iannucci's admitted, the actual purpose of these revelations was to ultimately change the public perception of politics, showing what happens in the privacy of governmental decisions, and awakening consequently a critical consciousness. This is what film experts such as Turner defended: film texts are more than a mere aesthetic or entertainment construct, they are contrarily a powerful vehicle for shaping ideas, and supporting or subverting ideologies. Films, as other artistic products, are ideological artefacts accomplishing a social practice, that of providing political significations to our culture (Turner, 1999: 3). However, some of the filmmakers analysed in this section (Stephen Frears, Peter Morgan or Richard Loncraine) denied any political involvement when filming the scripts. This does not guarantee the absence of ideological meanings, since, as we have actually seen, there was a subtle critique of the image of Tony Blair. Again Turner, and also Jameson defend the "unconscious" significations of every cultural text. As Jameson dictates, every cultural text is ultimately political and it is impossible to detach the product from its political, social and historical context, for "the convenient working distinction between cultural texts that are social and political and those that are not becomes something worse than an error" (Jameson, 2005: 5); he invites to "explore the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts" (5-6).

6.3 SATIRICAL CARTOONS: FROM IRAQ TO THE END OF BLAIR'S PREMIERSHIP

As shown in the previous sections, the Iraq war was perhaps the most controversial decision in Blair's whole premiership. It was criticised and satirised in different intellectual debates on the radio and television, and was analysed by rock bands and reputed filmmakers among many other cultural personalities of the time. Satirical cartoons are included in this dissertation as a form of popular art that similarly contributed to the dissection and denunciation of what was considered Blair's main mistake.

As other forms of popular arts, political cartoons have also been considered an instrument for eliciting social awareness. They not only represent the spirit of the times, but they also generate ideas and shape opinions. Victor S. Navasky, in his book *The Art of Controversy: Political Cartoons and their Enduring Power* (2013), analysed the power of cartoons despite their normally regarded low art status. Many art critics "dismissed cartoons and caricatures as fundamentally 'not serious,' 'inconsequential,' 'irrelevant,' 'marginal,' 'harmless,' 'frivolous,' 'a benign—even childish—indulgence,' 'immoral,' and 'silly'" (Navasky, 2013: xiv), also as caricaturist Ralph Steadman who labelled this form of art as "a cheap joke" (xiv). However, despite all prejudices concerning political cartoons, Navasky explored the underlying power that rules any form of social satire, since he believed in "satire as a particular effective instrument of social criticism" (xvi). Navasky was aware of the importance of images, and how advertising and visual propaganda can manipulate public opinion for political purposes (xviii). It was precisely the incident of the publication of some offensive cartoons of prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper in 2006 that caused hundreds of street protests, the shut down of some embassies, and the sudden death of some people (xiv). This provoked Navasky's interest in deepening into the power of political cartoons, and how cartoons elicit "emotional and primal responses" (6); as Navasky stated, "the more powerful the caricature, the more outraged the protest" (7). The effect of political cartoons is sometimes unexpected and underrated, they many times replace silences, verbalise taboos, and reveal what political correctness cannot afford. The author hence concluded:

> On significant occasion tyrants, presidents, courts, people—readers, viewers, citizens, illegals, what have you—are more moved to take political action by cartoons (especially caricatures) than by words, logic, and argument. (Xviii-xix)

Some British cartoonists of the Blair era, Steve Bell and Martin Rowson working for *The Guardian*, and Chris Riddell working for *The Observer*, were committedly involved in the denunciation, through their drawings, of the most controversial events of their time, and the Iraq war was precisely one of their main targets. They contributed to the analysis of the Blair years by exposing, through satire and caricature, the shameful acts of their government, and hoping, as Bell will later claim, that their representations had a direct impact on the public's perception of politics and on the protagonists of contemporary scandals. For practical reasons, only Bell will be analysed in this dissertation, as he was, together with Rowson, one of the most prominent political cartoonists of the Blair years. Riddell was, on the contrary, mostly known for his illustrations of children's books.

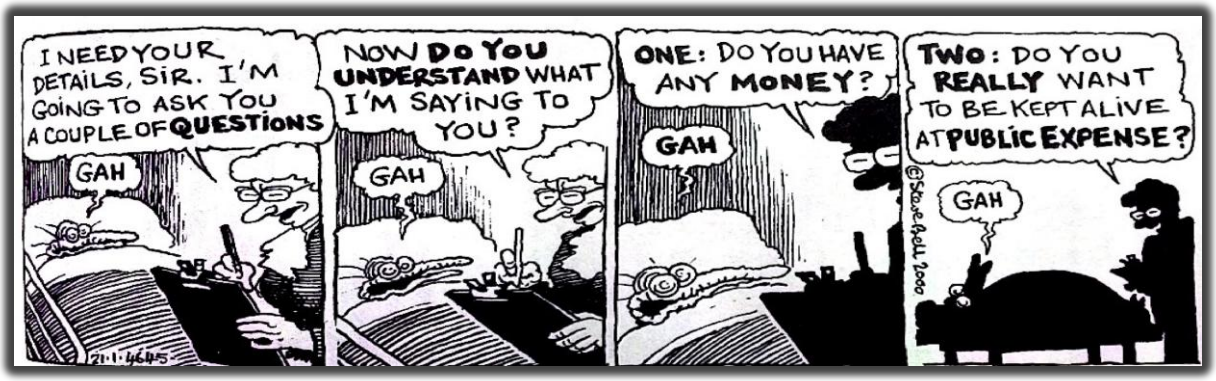
Steve Bell is perhaps a representative figure among those transgressive and controversial critics who have systematically denounced governments' incongruences and their abuse of power. He started making political strips against the conservative government in the 1980s for publications such as *Time Out* magazine, NME, *The New Statesman* and *The Guardian*, being the latter the newspaper that gave birth to Bell's well-known daily strip "If…" which covered the political eras of Thatcherism and later Blairism. Personally interested in politics, he has described himself as a "socialistic anarchist and libertarian" ("Steve Bell"); he has acknowledged his despise for Margaret Thatcher as well as his early suspicion and later cynicism towards Tony Blair, whom he considered a "neo-Thatcherite" (Bell, 1995). For Bell, having a political opinion has been necessary to be able to create his critical cartoons: "It doesn't matter if it's right wing, left wing, middle-of-the-road or whatever, to do it you have to have an opinion. Because that's where a political cartoonist starts, you start with the opinion, then you try to express it" (1995). He considers his work as functionally essential in political life, as cartooning is an "attacking medium" to disturb politicians and destabilise them: "Politicians put on a face, a mask, and you have to get under it" ("Steve Bell"). As Navasky, Bell also believes that political cartoons have a real effect on their targets, and, like popular satire, his caricatures function as a form of social criticism. In this sense, Bell was particularly inquisitive about Blair's government, and his views on New

Labour again shaped the curve of disenchantment that characterised the perceptions of the majority of intellectuals and critical figures selected in this dissertation. He admitted that he had initially been a supporter of the left and a Labour Party member, "but I gave it up a long time ago" (in Marshall, 2001). Although he espoused a change of government in 1997, he already envisaged that New Labour was conservative in disguise (Bell, 1995).

His representation of the Blair years comprise a wide range of topics and political reforms that, chronologically organised, perfectly draw the historical narrative of New Labour in pictures. In the beginning, Bell began representing the modernisation of the party, its conservatism, and the language of renewal that persistently wrapped New Labour: everything seemed to be exaggeratedly new and young. Blair's Third Way, and Bell's interpretation of it as "the third eye"—probably associated with the eye of wisdom in Buddhist tradition, a pseudo-religious vision of the Prime Minister—established Bell's best-known caricature of Blair's face, which will be repeated throughout Bell's whole series. New Labour's association with the middle classes and the rich, its privatisations in transport, education and NHS, pension reforms, the constitutional reform, the Kosovo war, the Iraq war, and Blair's troubled relationship with Gordon Brown would complete the cartoonist's thorough illustration of Blairism:

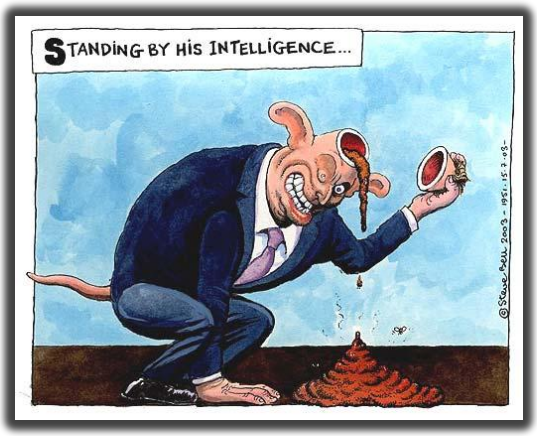
(Bell and Homer, 2001: 78)

(Bell, 2006: 117)



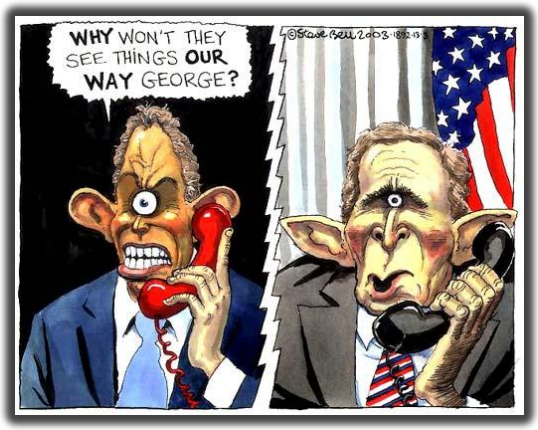
(Bell, 2001: 197)

However, it would be the war in Iraq the event that most inspired the cartoonist. Coinciding with the tenth anniversary of the war, 19 March 2013, *The Guardian* published a special section entitled "Iraq War: 10 Years On" where a number of journalists assessed the invasion's legacy and its disastrous consequences. Steve Bell contributed to the publication with an online video where he explained some of the drawings he had done about the war and about what he considered to be Blair's infamous decision to join George W. Bush into his imperialist quest (Bell, 2013a). In the video, he remembered the massive demonstration in February 2003 in the streets of London, which showed how the British people were against their government's decision, and emphasised that the international opposition to the war was also symbolically huge. Many of his drawings have satirically represented the evolving process of the making of the war, from Blair's controversial manipulation of the war dossier, which determined Iraq's supposedly imminent threat, to the obsessive interest of Blair and Bush to make their cause popularly supported with the argument of spreading a democratic civilisation:



(Bell, 2006: 80)

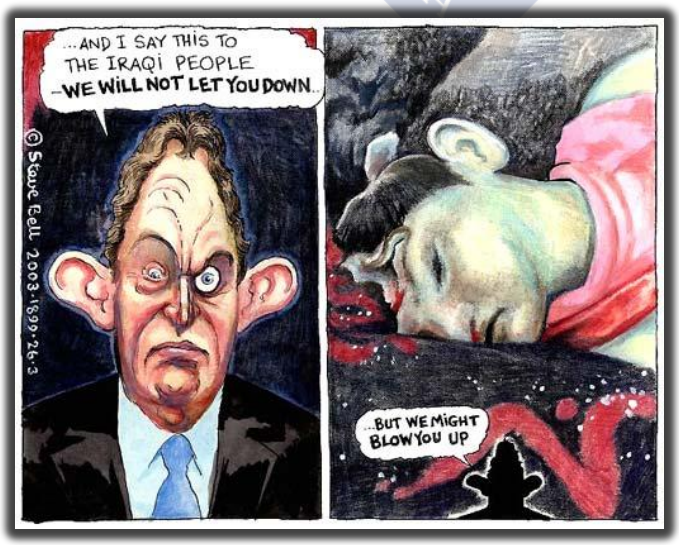
(Bell, 2008)



(Bell, 2003a)

(Bell, 2005)

Later, with the war started, reports and photographs about what was happening in this territory alarmed society, and Bell illustrated and caricatured the horror of those images that, although "generally humorous, they are not remotely funny, they are grisly" (Bell, 2013a). For Bell, the cartoonists "have a documentary function, which is your duty to make your point" and try to make an authentic representation "with pictures of what's actually happened" (2013a). He tried to report the facts with his cartoons, using real pictures of the war to illustrate the crudity at the other end. When describing his "We will not Let you Down" cartoon, he explained that he used a real picture of a young boy who was a victim of an explosion: "It just made me think of this idiot Blair letting this rip, letting it happen, not objecting to it. And then presumably to lie about the consequences of action, that's what I found most disgusting about Blair" (2013a).



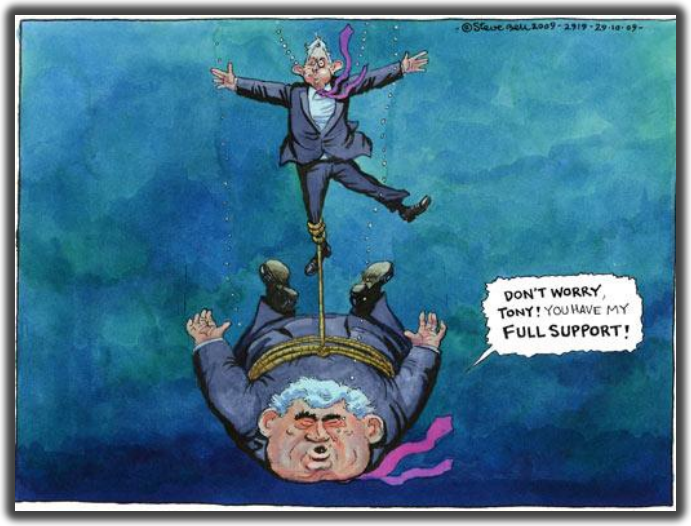
"We will not Let you Down" (Bell, 2003b)

"Tony Blair's Visit to Iraq" (Bell, 2006)

In retrospection, Bell has been particularly critical of Blair's indifference before the consequences of his actions and his incapacity to acknowledge, years later, that the Iraq war might have been a mistake, orchestrated on lies and on the belief that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction: "That's Blair now, that's Blair at this moment of time, completely unapologetic, completely shameless" (Bell, 2013a).

"Tony Blair Talks about Weapons of Mass Destruction" (Bell, 2013b)

Towards the end of the Blair years, the corrosion of his government did not come only from the anger and opposition that the war raised among the British people and the Labour Party voters. Also, the exhaustion of the government itself, and the inner conflicts between the two sides of the party, the Blairites and the Brownites, were again satirised in Bell's illustrations:



(Bell, 2009)

(Bell, 2006: 37)

Therefore, Steve Bell's cartoons and his satiric criticism have contributed to represent and bring attention towards the shameful acts of contemporary governments. His caricatures have the intention, as he has previously stated, of eliciting emotional responses that might ultimately create social awareness. This is the power of images, a type of social criticism that has real consequences on political life, and a direct impact on the perception of politics. These images, as moulding agents of social awareness, have the power of voicing scandals that are normally silenced by politically correct reports or pressures from power. It is therefore necessary to consider Bell's caricatures as a relevant and effective source of political criticism, as the artist himself was aware

of his work being an "attacking medium" ("Steve Bell") working in the line of many other cartoonists and popular artists who believed in the revolutionary power of political satire. Recent studies defend that

> Cartoons and caricatures have historically had and continue to have a unique emotional power and capacity to enrage, upset, and discombobulate otherwise rational people and groups and drive them to disproportionate-to-the-occasion, sometimes violent, emotionally charged behaviour. (Navasky, 2013: xxi)

Thus, Bell's work represents an example of how popular art is a form of political resistance, and functions as an instrument to conceptualise contemporary society and political vindications. The aim of this dissertation to include samples of popular culture—such as Bell's cartoons—goes in line with other studies that defend the role of popular art in the politicisation of culture, representing, for instance, the failures and injustices of elected governments. As a consequence, many visual artists "wish to overcome the elitism of contemporary art and to contribute to the building of a better, more socially just world" (Walker, 2001: 5). Finally, these cultural artists defend their social and intellectual function—together with other more reputed artistic expressions—to theorise contemporary politics and denounce social injustice. They join other twentieth- and twenty-first century critics who claim that culture "should be replaced by a non-hierarchical continuum, that is, a horizontal band or spectrum in which the fine and popular arts existed side by side in a condition of equality" (22).

6.4 FINAL THOUGHTS

This chapter covers a chronological evolution of the Blair years through the assessment of several cultural manifestations as intellectual representations and critical responses to Blair's government. In the early days of Blairism, when Blair's project was closely associated with youth culture and the music industry, many leading pop bands—mostly working-class—publicly supported the new Labour Party and participated of an optimistic cultural environment that seemed to anticipate new times. Many of these musicians soon realised that Blair's affair with the young had been a mere electoral strategy, and they felt betrayed in face of the new government's unexpected turn to the right in many social and youth policies.

Blair's first term in office exposed his gradual consolidation of power, until he secured himself a position of national and international leadership. By the early 2000s, some of the first assessments of Blair's governmental style took the shape of films and TV series, and filmmakers such as Stephen Frears or Armando Iannucci joined the cultural wave of political opposition to the Labour government. Their films and their personal involvement in British politics conformed the intellectual public denunciation of Blair's power, and they illustrated the most controversial aspects of the Blairite style: whereas power was supposed to be exerted from and for the people on the basis of progressive politics, reality showed that spin and lobbying determined many social rules as a means to protect the government's image and ultimately remain in power.

The Iraq war, its precedents and its consequences, would dominate Blair's second term. The conflict finally became Blair's Achilles' heel and defined and eclipsed his posterior legacy, being represented, criticised and satirised in numerous cultural products of the time. Roman Polanski and George Galloway's films, and Steve Bell's cartoons are the samples included in this dissertation, yet they only constitute a representation of the extant material against the war. These critics and their instinctive reactions facing the making of the war—political lying, the war dossier, imperialist interests—have denounced how undemocratic governments can be, even in those countries that wave the flag of freedom and justice.

Therefore, can we consider George Galloway, Armando Iannucci, Steve Bell or Noel Gallagher as contemporary intellectuals? The answer is that they have exercised, regularly or in a particular moment in their lives, the function of opposition that formerly traditional intellectuals used to perform, and they now operate as public voices reminding governments of their faults and contributing to widen the public's perception of what is unknown about politics. Again, the answer to that question is that they have contributed with their cultural products to the intellectual representation and analysis of Blair's project, being critical, and in some cases, systematically committed to the denunciation of what they considered unfair and authoritarian.

However, it is also necessary to specify differences among the figures selected in this chapter. Whereas some of them have been systematically coherent in their critical positions; others, contrastingly, have been unstable, contradictory and inconsistent with what Gramsci stated as the "organic interests" of the group or class they defend. In the music industry sector, for instance, we find that figures such as Noel Gallagher have noteworthily performed the role of the nonconformist challenger to Blair's discourse,

and he has particularly been one of those musicians habitually involved in political issues; yet, although working-class in origin, he became too commercial, too middle-class, and too central to the star system. In his book *Britpop! Cool Britannia and the Spectacular Demise of English Rock* (2003), John Harris holds that Britpop, and bands such as *Oasis*, became too commercial, especially compared with previous bands of the counter-culture British punk of the 1970s:

> A good deal of the Britpop generation had cut their teeth in the indie world—but whereas their predecessors had seemed to view mass-market success as a pollutant of artistic purity, now it was almost seen as a duty. (Harris, 2004: xvi)

Gallagher in particular has widely admitted a U-turn in his lifestyle as a rocker: "I've moved on. I'm going to have to stop wearing casual shoes and wear proper shoes" (in Garratt, 2011). Now he owns a £110,000 Jaguar, his daughter attends a boarding school, and he seems proud of his children growing up middle-class: "At least they won't be on the dole. People often ask this in interviews, am I going to send them to private school. Of course I am! I want them to have a better education than I had" (in Garratt, 2011). When analysing Gallagher as a dissident political figure, I would like to emphasise that although he was not a systematic political critic, but instead a commercial rock star, his function as an occasional oppositional voice is still valid when he aims to dismantle Blair's weaknesses and his considered betrayals, and still and all, this figure does not always fit the standards of the fully committed intellectual: not always systematically coherent and faithful to the organic interests of those he represents.

Filmmakers Stephen Frears or Armando Iannucci show perhaps a more stable trajectory as social and political analysts; the research that precedes their films, the interest they take to see beyond and understand what politics is made of so as to eventually reveal to the public eye what happens behind the stage contributes to the deconstruction of elected governments. Frears has admitted that in his Blair films he tried to see the human side of the Prime Minister, but his personal contempt for the politician has made him blunt and straightforward in his assessment of Blair's decisions. Iannucci, in this sense, has moved further and has considered his duty to make his own work an act of political denunciation. He finds filming a tool to touch, impress or influence people's perception of what politics really involves, and with his satires he

manages to create some political and moral conscience that embarrasses both protagonists and spectators. The effect of cultivating a moral climate ultimately entails demands for political transparency and eventually inspires some sort of change.

In this direction, cartoonist Steve Bell also considered his work "an attacking medium" to destabilise politicians. His politically incorrect illustrations have sometimes caused controversy; crossing the line of politeness, this transgression was what ultimately debilitated the government's authority. Bell has been a loyal interpreter of political contemporaneity, and a systematic and provocative critic of British politics.

Figures such as pop musicians, filmmakers and political cartoonists seem to defend the role of popular culture in its aim to deconstruct political discourses and raise social consciousness. They all agree on the functional and efficient role that they, as artists, have in society: their work makes people think about and question the truths that governments defend so as to eventually debilitate and dismantle their discourses. That is the political function of cultural products, which are again intellectual representations of the culture and politics of a country. This chapter—devoted to popular culture products in their function as intellectual counter-hegemonic constructs—concludes that popular culture and popular arts are as valid as other more reputable and prestigious products when it comes to participate in political struggles from a theoretical and intellectual perspective.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has analysed a broad spectrum of insurgent voices that publicly complained and criticised the government of Tony Blair from 1997 to 2007. It has been a holistic and comprehensive study of a wide number of leading public figures in their subversive and oppositional reactions to the politics of Tony Blair's New Labour, from its founding modernisation in the early years of the 1990s, to his arrival in government and his subsequent resignation after ten years in office. Thus, with the aim of studying the historical and chronological evolution of these intellectuals' perceptions of the government of the day, I have categorised an extensive field of subversive voices into three distinct groups, according to their professions and their subversive artistic and political activities. Firstly, there are the fiction writers, those liberal and commonly considered left-wing literary voices that openly denounced Blair's growing conservatism either with their narratives or with their public declarations. Secondly, we have the critics and theorists, those political analysts and philosophers of the left that contributed with their essays to attack Blair's widely commented Thatcherite legacy—advancing, consequently, the theoretical discussions on the state of the left. Finally, there are the artists and the figures of the cultural sphere, those musicians, filmmakers and political cartoonists that angrily responded to Labour's U-turn in its social democratic trajectory. This made Labour, in their view, not only the equivalent of the Conservative Party but mainly a traitor to the democratic, social and moral ethic that had previously nourished Blair's party. As demonstrated throughout this dissertation, this selection of dissident voices has been chronologically organised in order to emphasise the growing discontent among liberal intellectuals who initially received

Blair's project with optimism and enthusiasm—despite evident signs of their suspicion towards his ideological transformation—but who gradually became disillusioned, frustrated and enraged in the face of some decisions of the Prime Minister, namely Blair's betrayal of the principles of the Labour Party, and among other controversial decisions, his war in Iraq. This was the often-commented curve of disenchantment that left-wing voices articulated from the arrival of Tony Blair as leader of the party until his eventual departure in 2007.

Therefore, this dissertation has aimed to respond several questions. First of all, who the subversive and counter-hegemonic voices opposed to Blair's politics were, what insurgent actions/writings they used to perform this political opposition, and finally, whether or not they demonstrated a subversive functionality according to three paramount theorists on the discourses of intelligentsia: Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault and Edward Said. With this analysis, it has also been my intention to contribute to debates on the state of the contemporary intellectual from the turn of the twenty-first century until 2007, for this was the year of Blair's departure from power. Besides, the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 might divert the shapes and functionality of later intellectuals. In opposition to critics that have pessimistically disregarded the role and response of present-day public voices in political issues, I here claim to defend the effectual functionality of many—although not all—of the writers, thinkers and artists here included. Are we, consequently, witnessing *the death of the intellectual*? My conclusion is that there are in fact many nonconformist voices that, working by majority from their individuality rather than their collectivity, have effectively performed a counter-hegemonic criticism of Blair's premiership, with the ultimate aim of debilitating and dismantling the official discourses of Blairism.

First of all, with regards to the fiction writers here analysed, I have gone through the critical writings and utterances of those oppositional voices that initially caricatured but later angrily reacted against Blair's politics. Some of these writers, already canonical within the establishment and who had been particularly active during the previous conservative decade, continued their political engagement during the Blair years. Such was the case of Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, Margaret Drabble, Harold Pinter, Hanif Kureishi, Fay Weldon or Ian McEwan. However, other new literary voices more related to popular and commercial fiction flourished in the New Labour era as frequent analysts and critics of contemporary politics, and whose categorically political attacks on Blair's government were, as already mentioned, sometimes more incisive and

acute than those of the literary establishment. Writers such as Sue Townsend, Robert Harris, Jonathan Coe and Blake Morrison, among other mainstream writers of the time, contributed with their unequivocal fictional representations and other opinion statements to deconstruct Blair's hegemonic discourse.

However, in their diversity of styles and degrees of political commitment, some writers stood out either for their systematic political activism against Blair's government, or for their ambivalent support towards it. On the one hand, Harold Pinter was one of the leading intellectuals during the Blair years, considered as such for his outspoken loathing of Blair's unconditional support for the United States, for the Prime Minister's abuse of truth and power when manipulating public discourses, and for his undemocratic and unilateral decisions that, in the writers' opinion, dishonoured the banners of freedom and justice. On the other hand, writers such as Martin Amis or Ian McEwan, who had been oppositional writers to the Thatcher rule, now seemed ambivalent and sometimes compassionate and indulgent with the Prime Minister. Their hesitant attitude hardly placed these writers as counter-hegemonic voices, and instead, located them more closely to the dominant Blairite views of the time.

All the other fiction writers analysed in chapter four, despite their unmistakable critical position to the government, were also considered middle-class authors—or even millionaires and well-off individuals such as Robert Harris or Sue Townsend—who, despite their socio-economic comfort, did not hesitate to present an explicit and indisputable resistance to Blair's discourse. And yet, is it not contradictory that middle-class writers such as these conducted the counter-power struggle against Blairism? I am in a position to conclude that, despite these writers' contradictions and incongruences that existed between their political criticism and their social accommodation, they effectively functioned as oppositional voices that attempted to deconstruct and debilitate Blair's power: their middle-class position did not, eventually, disqualify them from subversive writing.

Despite differences that evidently existed among all these writers, the majority of them have been analysed in this dissertation as effective counter-hegemonic voices because they have been openly critical of the main weaknesses of Blairism. With their novels, and other explicit attacks in interviews and public statements, these writers contributed to challenge Blair's official discourse. Notwithstanding their mainly declared affinities with the left, they turned against the government as soon as it was

proved that Blair represented a betrayal of the social democratic principles he claimed to represent, and as soon as Blair's exertion of power menaced the ideals of truth and justice.

Critics and theorists of the left also contributed to the political resistance against Blairism. Those social democrats associated with the theoretical branch of the left were in charge of responding to the ideological changes of the day with their analyses, opinion essays and other public declarations. Having been the intellectual voices of the new revisionism of the 1980s, and aware of the deficiencies of the left to present itself as a realistic alternative to Thatcherism, these authors advocated a modernisation of the Labour Party. Writers such as Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques or Eric Hobsbawm initiated a theoretical debate that, unintentionally and unconsciously, was later used by Anthony Giddens and Tony Blair in their proposal of the Third Way. Despite these authors negating that Blairism was closely related to their *New Times* thesis, they were hesitantly supportive of New Labour to win the 1997 election. Scarcely a year after Blair entered Downing Street and his reforms began to take shape, these thinkers quickly retracted themselves and opposed the eventual outcome of Blairism. Together with other relevant critics of the time—such as Alex Callinicos, Will Hutton, David Marquand, Tony Judt, and Roy Hattersley—they contributed with significant literature to the theoretical debates of the time, mostly oriented towards a categorical rejection of the direction the left was taking under Blair.

Additionally, other voices also began to emerge in these theoretical debates. Many journalists and political analysts also contributed with their essays to oppose the Blairite discourse, and similarly embodied the counter-hegemonic criticism of the newly established neoliberal approach of the Labour Party. Andrew Marr, Simon Jenkins, Polly Toynbee, Hugo Young, and John Gray among others were the leading figures that systematically exposed the idea that Blair's New Labour had become the continuation of Thatcherism, and that his defence of the private and the market society, as well as his submission to the effects of globalisation had detached the party from its organic roots of social justice and democracy.

All together, these authors—theorists, critics, and journalists—correspondingly contributed to the eloquent disenchantment with Blair's project, for it had moved evidently to the right. In view of the above, the new oppositional figure that reacted against Blairism was now a hybrid kind of intellectual that, still broadly oppositional to the government, fluctuated between areas of political theory and mainstream media in

order to deconstruct the Blairite discourse. Whereas many of them initially expressed their optimism for a Labour victory—mostly based on the belief that Blair's modernisation of the party was intimately connected to the claims of the left—they eventually felt disappointed when they realised that Blairism had embraced the precepts of Thatcherism.

Finally, the closing chapter of this dissertation analysed the artistic and cultural phenomena that critically reacted against Blair's government: from the early enthusiasm of the British pop/rock of the 1990s—with bands such as *Oasis* and *Blur* leading the political propaganda of Blair's party—to the later disenchantment of these bands that soon realised that Blair's affair with the music industry had only been orchestrated in his own benefit to promote the party's modernising and promising image. In this respect, filmmakers such as Stephen Frears, Richard Loncraine or Armando Iannucci also contributed to deconstruct Blair's established power, by emphasising the image of the Prime Minister as ambitious and opportunistic, manipulating public opinion with the ultimate aim to remain in power. In this sense, the Iraq war also became the target of similar cultural products: Roman Polanski's adaptation of Robert Harris's novel *The Ghost* was one of the most significant visual representations of the disenchantment that the invasion in Iraq aroused among subversive voices. The film, together with the political cartoons of Steve Bell, constituted other samples of popular art as effective mechanisms to criticise Blair's politics.

Hence, with the aim of showing that other forms of subversive action are possible on the margins of the established and erudite intelligentsia, these kinds of cultural products have been included in this dissertation. It has therefore been my intention to demonstrate the forceful function of popular art, not only to participate in the political criticism of the time, but also to deconstruct the established ideology and the official discourses of Blairism. In my attempt to defend the functioning role of different kinds of political criticism—from erudite literature to popular fiction, from intellectual political theory to mainstream journalism, from cinema to pop music—the basic aim of this dissertation has been to show that, despite the fact that many highbrow voices were still operative in the intellectual political debates of Blair's premiership, other new voices emerged to exert the dissenting and counter-hegemonic function of "the great writer" of yesteryear.

I am in the position to conclude that, in spite of critics who have claimed that the intellectual is an extinct species, there are British intellectuals in Britain, who, as shown throughout this study, have been very much involved in the political life of their country and, with their critical views and analyses, have eagerly participated in the deconstruction of Blair's hegemonic discourse. The demise of the political intellectual is only seen through the high expectations of those who idealised the figure of the twentieth-century writer, and who judge present-day intellectuals only by their contradictions and inconsistences. As has been shown, not even twentieth-century intellectuals were exempt from criticism by their contemporaries for being contradictory, for being too bourgeois, or for reproducing the class prejudices against which they reacted. The twenty-first century intellectual—at least the one that was operative during the Blair mandate—did not lack criticism in that respect, and mostly embodied forceful counter-power attacks on the existing government. In this way, up to the year 2007, the twenty-first century intellectual can be identified by either his or her opposition to the abuse of power, to the abandonment of social claims by the Labour government, and to the manipulation of truth in order to ultimately remain in power. The new intellectual still maintains his/her intrinsic critical views, yet it is the new *status* of the intellectual that has made him/her recently invisible. The early twenty-first century intellectual cannot be judged by past standards and is in need of being recognised in regards to their new forms and significations, bearing in mind the challenges of the historical conjuncture.

There is a compelling need to open the scope of intellectual recognition and include those subjugated voices that have been recently disqualified. It has been argued that intellectuals are too bourgeois or too middle-class (such as contemporary fiction writers), that popular culture is out of intellectual scientificity (such as Britpop), and that all contemporary public voices enjoy the comforts and well-being of their privileged position. Here, as Edward Said stated, it is necessary to consider these subversive figures according to their attitudes in opposition, not in their accommodation. It is necessary to understand their functional dissidence within the multiplicity of contemporary culture, for this new type of intellectual now revolves around the borders of high and low culture, and is formed by hybrid multifaceted identities.

Due to the nature of this research, it has been impossible to cover every single author or critical voice and every single text or cultural product with detailed exhaustiveness. I will therefore include here some samples of possible future line

research: for instance, a wide number of monographic analyses could be made of every author included here, in their individuality and in their opposition to the politics of the day. In view of this, a possible line of research could encompass an analysis of Harold Pinter's politics during his last years until his death, which would show the writer's disaffection with the politics of his country. In a similar vein, a historic-political study of Sue Townsend's novels—often regarded as unsuitable for academic analysis—would reveal the writer's interesting views on British politics. This is also the case with many of the popular fiction novels that have been included in this dissertation: they seemed to not attract academic attention.

Most importantly, I would suggest analysing the evolution of British intellectuals after Blair's departure, not only during Gordon Brown's term but also during the subsequent conservative-led coalition government of David Cameron. It could be interesting to see whether precisely after Blair's departure from government, and scarcely one year later, the Global Financial Crisis might have changed the reactions of early twenty-first century intellectuals. To analyse whether they were radicalised—or not—in the face of the drastic cuts in public services during this economic crisis would be an interesting continuation for this dissertation.

Moreover, it would be equally engaging to analyse the direction of the left in Britain after Blair's departure. As detailed in this dissertation, the critics and theorists of the left, despite their initial instincts of modernisation, quickly removed their timid support for Blair's New Labour and became radical critics of his evident conservatism. Where did the left go after New Labour? What is the future of the left in the twenty-first century? Has the left functioned as a counter-hegemonic alternative to the economic crisis? The floor is open for new research into this fascinating area of knowledge.

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APPENDIX I

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LABOUR CABINETS 1997—2007

1. New Labour Cabinet 1997

Position	Holder
Prime Minister	Tony Blair
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Gordon Brown
Deputy Prime Minister	John Prescott
Trade and Industry	Margaret Beckett
Home Secretary	Jack Straw
Foreign Secretary	Robin Cook
Education Secretary	David Blunkett
International Development Secretary	Clare Short
Northern Ireland Secretary	Mo Mowlam
Culture Secretary	Chris Smith
Health Secretary	Frank Dobson
Leader of the Commons	Ann Taylor
Welsh Secretary	Ron Davies
Transport Secretary	Gavin Strang
Lord Chancellor	Lord Irvine
Leader of Lords	Lord Richard
Agriculture	Jack Cunningham
Defence Secretary	George Robertson
Scottish Secretary	Donald Dewar
Cabinet Secretary	Sir Robin Butler
Chief Treasury Secretary	Alistair Darling
Social Security	Harriet Harman
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	David Clark
Chief Whip	Nick Brown
Director of Communications and Strategy	Alastair Campbell
Minister without Portfolio	Peter Mandelson

2. New Labour Cabinet 2001

Position	Holder
Prime Minister	Tony Blair
Deputy Prime Minister	John Prescott
Lord Privy Seal	Lord Williams of Mostyn
Lord Chancellor	Lord Irvine
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Gordon Brown
Leader of the Commons	Robin Cook
Home Secretary	David Blunkett
Education	Estelle Morris
Foreign Affairs	Jack Straw
Trade and Industry	Patricia Hewitt
Health Secretary	Alan Milburn
Defence Secretary	Geoff Hoon
Scottish Secretary	Helen Liddell
Welsh Secretary	Paul Murphy
Northern Ireland Secretary	John Reid
Social Security	Alistair Darling
International Development	Clare Short
Chief Secretary	Andrew Smith
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Margaret Beckett
Transport	Stephen Byers
Culture, Media and Sport	Tessa Jowell

3. New Labour Cabinet 2005

Position	Holder
Prime Minister	Tony Blair
Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State	John Prescott
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Gordon Brown
Foreign Secretary	Jack Straw
Environment	Margaret Beckett

Transport and Secretary of State for Scotland	Alistair Darling
Health Secretary	Patricia Hewitt
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Wales	Peter Hain
Defence	John Reid
Trade and Industry	Alan Johnson
Culture, Media and Sport	Tessa Jowell
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury	Hilary Armstrong
Home Secretary	Charles Clarke
Chief Secretary to the Treasury	Des Browne
Leader of the Commons	Geoffrey Hoon
Minister without Portfolio and Party Chair	Ian McCartney
Leader of the House of Lords	Baroness Amos
Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs	Lord Falconer of Thoroton
International Development	Hilary Benn
Work and Pensions	David Blunkett
Education	Ruth Kelly
Minister of Communities and Local Gov.	David Miliband

4. Most Relevant Reshuffles

Robin Cook: Foreign Secretary in 1997, President of the Council and Leader of the Commons in 2002. Resigned from government over the war in Iraq in March 2003.

David Blunkett: Education and Employment in 1997, Home Office in 2003, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in 2005.

Alistair Darling: Chief Secretary to the Treasury in 1997, Transport in 2002, Secretary of State for Transport and Secretary of State for Scotland in 2005.

John Reid: Minister without Portfolio and Party Chair in 2002, Health in 2004, Defence in 2005.

Charles Clarke: Education in 2002, Home Secretary in 2005.

Peter Mandelson: Minister without Portfolio in 1997, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in 1998, Northern Ireland Secretary in 1999, and EU Commissioner, European Trade Delegate in 2003.

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APPENDIX II

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AN INTERVIEW WITH JONATHAN COE
DECONSTRUCTING THE POLITICAL ZEITGEIST

I sit with writer Jonathan Coe in the hall of his hotel in Gijón, one day during the course of the Spoken Word Literary Festival in March 2010. As his novels satirically depict the features of the present age I take the opportunity to converse with him about the relationship between his narrative and contemporary society. I want to pay special attention to the representation of politics in his work and he will be invited to put forward his views on the most recent political history of Britain.

In your opinion, how was the evolution of the British intellectuals regarding Tony Blair's premiership?

The first thing you should bear in mind is that, and this is a strange thing about Britain, nobody uses the word "intellectual", which I find an interesting feature of British life, because you come to Europe, you come to France, Spain or Italy, you use the word "intellectual" and everybody knows what you mean. But in Britain, maybe it is because fundamentally we are a kind of anti-intellectual culture, when the word is used is almost the word of abuse. Instead, what you call to this conglomeration of people, writers, academics, journalists… we don't really have a collective word for these people, which is strange. Somebody should write about this because it's an interesting thing about Britain. We are embarrassed by this word, but generally speaking, among those kinds of people we are talking about, maybe "the cultural establishment" is a good phrase. There was tremendous enthusiasm and optimism for Tony Blair in 1997 and the evolution was quite simple really, gradually people became more and more disillusioned because they found that what they were expecting from Tony Blair was a break from Thatcherism, as it became clear that economically, what he was doing was not that different to Mrs Thatcher. It also became clear that actually Tony Blair was not more favorable to the cultural establishment than Mrs Thatcher had been, as that became clear that the people began to get more and more disillusioned and the disillusionment crystallised at the time of the Iraq War, which was the kind of turning point really in their administration. Most people in the cultural establishment and a lot of the country fell deeply out of love with Tony Blair at that point, and from then on, it was just a question of time before he

was replaced as Prime Minister. And now his reputation among writers and journalists, and academics and so on is extremely low, probably as low as Mrs Thatcher's.

In your book* The Closed Circle, *you express your dislike towards Blair's Premiership. Why did you decide to include politics in your book?

The Closed Circle was always conceived as a companion piece to *The Rotters' Club*. And I wanted the two books to be the story of a small group of characters, a small group of friends, and to contrast the different people they are in their adolescence to the people they become in their middle age. I wanted, as a kind of counterpoint to that, to draw a more general portrait of Britain as it was in the 1970s, of Britain as it became in the 1990s and the 2000. It was always the plan that readers of the two books will have a sense of the texture of political life in the 1970s and the present day.

So, after all, you wanted to display the Zeitgeist in both books.

Well, there is a big time lapse between the two books, *The Rotters' Club* ends in 1979 and *The Closed Circle* begins in 1999. What happens in those intervening twenty years? One way to be looking at it is to take the two books between them, they are actually about Mrs Thatcher, and about the way she changes Britain. But I write about that by leaving her out of the picture completely and showing what was life like before and what it was like after. In a way I don't think *The Closed Circle* is a novel about Tony Blair's Britain, I think it was a novel about post-Thatcher Britain. But the central relationship in *The Closed Circle* is the relationship between Paul, a Member of Parliament and Malvina, his researcher and also a kind of media adviser. That was a way of investigating and making personal the relationship between Tony Blair's Labour Party and the media, because, in a way, Tony Blair's government is the first postmodern government in Britain, the one where the image is just as real as or even more real than the substance.

Concerning your character Paul Trotter, the MP, why did you decide to show politics from the inside?

I suppose the last political novel I have written was *What a Carve Up!* which looks at a politician, a conservative politician, but it looks at it at the outside, treated him as a cartoon character. But I wanted to look at the personality of Paul Trotter because I wanted to see if I can understand him, because politicians to me are kind of

incomprehensible. I've met a few, not very many, and I am fascinated by the contradiction between their personal life and their political life, which seems to me, in almost every case, impossible to reconcile those two and to try to keep that personal integrity they have in order to lead a satisfactory personal life. It seems impossible to do that in a political sphere because politics, particularly now, is completely about compromises and about giving up your ideals, which is why you get so many political scandals. The ideal never measures up to the reality. I just wanted to investigate for myself that contradiction, between personal values and political values. They come together, in a sort of grotesque way, in the case of Paul Trotter when he decides to vote in favour of the Iraq War because it means he can keep the flat to have his affair there.

Precisely in* The Thick of It *politicians are portrayed as human beings that are stressed, that cannot cope with everything that they have to do, that cannot sleep.

Well, a few months ago I was asked to be a guest director in a Literary Festival in Cheltenham in the UK. They asked me to programme some events, and I programmed a discussion between me, Armando Iannucci and two other political satirists. It was a very interesting session, we talked for about an hour and a half. The peculiar thing was that, at the end of the ninety minutes, all these writers who have all been very savage in their satire about politicians ended up agreeing that we felt sorry for them because their lives were incredibly stressful, their lives were impossible, most of them went into it in a very idealistic way thinking that they were going to do good and when they got there they discovered that the power structures wouldn't allow them to do what they wanted. It was interesting that our conclusion, at the end of that discussion, was that politicians are human as well, and you shouldn't forget their human qualities and their human difficulties.

Does the fact of including politics in your narrative respond to your commitment to the times you are living in?

I don't want to lay down rules about this because every writer is free to write about what they want to write. You'll find some people in Britain, for instance, who would say that British writers write about the past too much, or they write about fantasy too much, and they are not committed to writing about the present day. I don't agree with that really; I feel, as I say, that writers are free to write about whatever they want. For instance, I don't know if you have read it or heard of it, Hillary Mantel has just written a

book called *Wolf Hall* which is set in the Tudor period and it's about Tomas Cromwell. So it's a historical novel but it's actually a brilliant novel about contemporary British politics, she's found the way of writing about the present through the past. You don't always have to write directly about the here and now, but it's what I like to do, I find the present perpetually bewildering, it excites my curiosity and one of the reasons I write is to try to understand for myself more of the times we are living.

AN INTERVIEW WITH TOBY LITT
COMING TO TERMS WITH 21ST CENTURY BRITISH POLITICS

***This interview was published in *JES Journal of English Studies* 9 (2011): 277-286.**

I sit with novelist and short story writer Toby Litt during the course of the 34th AEDEAN Conference in Almería in November 2010. I take the opportunity to converse with him about social and political mores in the UK, about the social changes that have contributed to an evolved national structure after the New Labour era, together with the political position of the intelligentsia in the UK and the rationale for their writing.

After the recent elections (May 2010) and with the Tories back in power, it is unavoidable an assessment of the "New Labour" years. How do you think this period will be remembered? How has the country changed?

The main thing for me is that Blairism was not an ideological riposte to Thatcherism. In its essence, it was a continuation. For example, we can talk about cities and countryside, but let's talk about cities first. The way they have continued to change, to become homogenised, to become Americanised in their structures, and their centres; they are first decimated by being emptied out, then revived by museums, galleries, and chain restaurants, Starbucks… things like that. The remaking of the countryside, a sort of bland corporate place which began in 1979, or at least in my memory, has brought pluses and minuses. You can probably go to civic spaces that are not the sort of concrete bunkers of the 1970s. In the country, I think the rural areas were seen by Labour as being not-where-the-voters-were; there was certainly a neglect of the people living there; for example, there was a continuing erosion of communities and what held them together, closing post-offices and village pubs. So in a way, it was far less significant than what there was set in train by Margaret Thatcher, where the ideological argument about how the British economy should function was basically won. There was an attempt by New Labour to mitigate the worst effects of Thatcherism, but there wasn't really any attempt to provide an alternative, and what we have now is a return to a sort of accelerated version of those things. The way I see it now is that Blair managed to sell back to the British people what they already bought once, and do it under a different heading. But New Labour did certainly have a stronger social justice agenda

which did make a difference to lots of people, as a genuine attempt to bring people on the lowest levels to a better level of living. There was also a turning away from some of the vindictive kind of legislation that you got under the Thatcher government which seemed to be motivated by hate of different parts of society, for homosexuals or the unemployed, and a desire to socially punish those people. It used to be very difficult for people who were out of work and had no address to get back into society. I think nowadays it's not quite the same catch-22 where you can't get a job, if you have no job, you can't get an address… It seems nonsensical to put people in a position where they can't help themselves.

Margaret Thatcher's government was characterised by a strong ideological content whereas with Blairism, it has been said that it was not really an ideological project, but a compound of different and contradictory policies. However, taking a broad balance of these ten/thirteen years and comparing them with the past conservative era, has it been positive as far as living standards are concerned? Would you agree with that?

Yes, I think that's true if you compare what another ten years of Conservative government would have done, and what the family housing service would have been, what the state of schools, in terms of infrastructure would have been. A huge amount of money did go into education, but to me the root of it is very simple. The question was whether there was any possibility of market capitalism being resisted by the state, and in this sense there wasn't an ideological switch. There have been numerous iconic failures of partnership between public and private funding such as the Millennium Dome, or such as the Channel tunnel, where essentially it gets messed up and the state has to bring the project through. It turns out to be a completely botched kind of job that continues to be issued to everyone as the model by which "things can only get better," which is also the way Blair thought that they can get better. The New Labour rebranding project, early on, had to do with wooing the right-wing press, and getting things like *Financial Times* on their side. They had done that at least one election prior to winning, and in the end they won. It was a way of not scaring the City. I can remember my father talking about how, basically, if a Labour government got in, the next day there would be almost a stock market collapse, there would run on the pound, investor confidence would be depleted around the world, and no one would want to invest in the UK anymore, because they'd seen him as a Communist. It was ludicrous,

although New Labour was palliative in terms of social justice, it wasn't a Socialist party in any way. Could a socialist party have got into power? Probably not. I don't know. Perhaps I am deluded about the kind of party the British people are likely to vote for. They are probably more likely to vote for a Social Democratic party than a Socialist party. And a lot of them have benefited by being brought into capitalism or brought into the market economy by the sale of council homes or share issues, and quick injections of money into the economy, in some of Nigel Lawson's budgets, lowering the rates of tax. I think there would not have been a missed opportunity if there had been a greater sense of what could have been done, with more strategic kind of thinking, what kind of country we wanted to be. I don't think we do, except if it's to be a provider of financial services with lower standards of regulation, for the world to use as a kind of economic junction box, where we skim up a little bit of money because it passes through, and a tourist site and some kind of begrudged art venue, some kind of out of town barn where you put up some Damien Hirst and some Tracey Emin. You allow some of these scruffy people, who seem to have interested people all over the world, to earn you lots of money by putting them in huge refurbished buildings, or brand new buildings, without actually looking at where those people came from. By being able to go to Art schools, you know, state Education, they allowed them to turn out the way they did and the way things are now. They negate the possibility of people doing that again. I think giving creative people the license to doss around, to do very little for three years, but then the good ones come out with something, that's much more questioning in some ways. Then if you go through an education system like they have in Japan or they have in America, we don't seem to be able to acknowledge that everything is bureaucratised, and I work in the university, the language of the administration of the university is completely divorced from any hypocritical thought.

So you think that artists like Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin had an important role in the New Labour modernisation project, in order to transform the UK into a kind of marketable nation and be exported.

I think that Damien Hirst is entirely a subset of Andy Warhol. His little circle doesn't really poke outside. Having an auction of a diamond-incrusted skull and cutting out the dealer—those things are what Warhol didn't do, but they are entirely within his logic. If Damien Hirst has extended Warhol it's in a straight line, and I think he fits entirely within the New Labour agenda.

Would you classify these artists within the central term of 'intellectuals'?

No, artists and musicians are not intellectuals, most of the time. They don't articulate their thought in that way. They think *through* their work, and their words about their work are usually appalling—in terms of what they cobble together as artist statements. They come out with things that make you not want to look at the art. I mean, Damien Hirst doesn't particularly do that. But if you go to an art school and read the artists' statements… they are usually two very damp paragraphs that don't really make sense. And the wise artists will probably just quote someone and leave it at that. There isn't, to my mind, a coherent artistic community that talks within itself. Some of my writing was very much influenced by some of the artists called YBAs, Jack & Dinos Chapman, for example, their "Hell." I think I have been affected by the kind of extremity that those artists were prepared to use. And I felt fairly isolated in being influenced by them. I couldn't really look around and see many other writers who were letting that in. A lot of contemporary British writing is quite hermetically sealed within a scene that doesn't engage with other art forms, except as subject matter. I think it would be rare to find many novelists or poets who would be happy to say "Yes, I am an intellectual." Certainly there are places where they might be encouraged to say it, on a British Council funded trip to Spain, but in a pub in their home town, no. Intellectuals don't have very much value…

The concept of intellectuals in Britain is a very controversial one. For instance, in Spain or France the concept of intellectual is understood as a conglomeration of writers, journalists or academics… how is this interpreted in the UK? Who are the British intellectuals today?

A lot of very intelligent people work for tabloid newspapers, for example, and their job is to think of what the million people or whatever who buy that paper want to hear and then give it to them, in a language these people want to hear, too. I would say the people who do that, who have a lot of power, are intellectuals but they would hate it if that word came anything near them—they would disown it and they would speak in a different kind of voice and a different kind of language. The idea of speaking something to people they don't want to hear in a complicated way means that anyone branded an intellectual will end up being ridiculed and destroyed by the tabloid press, assisted by politicians. Take Harold Pinter as an example. He was, by any European standard, an engaged intellectual. He was politically active. He was involved in English and

International PEN. But he was also famously involved in the Palestinian cause, and used his Nobel acceptance speech to make an immensely coherent attack on what he saw as the state of the world because of American foreign policy. But prior to this, he had been so caricatured in the press as a man of intemperate anger, as a bizarrely knee-jerk anti American, as his comments were not thought through in any way. And so what he said on this occasion passed almost without a comma, without debate, despite the fact that he was an English writer winning the Nobel Prize—which doesn't happen very often—and taking that opportunity to say, "No, I am not just an East End playwright who happens to have written some staff about boarding houses in the south of England, or gangsters in strange hotels or whatever. I am a political writer, an engaged political writer." If a writer as considerable as Pinter says something like that, and you see it disappear, you realise that that position—of intellectual—is, for lots of reasons, not wanted within British society. Not wanted by the tabloids, not wanted by the politicians and therefore not really getting through to people. I don't know exactly how *The Sun*, *The Mirror* would have reported him winning the Nobel Prize, but I doubt it would have merited more than 80 or 100 words. I don't know if they would have reported anything he said. Pinter was trying to present a linked up view of things, of the state of the Middle East, and saying you can see there are specific geopolitical reason for this. On the plus side, at least, is that English intellectuals can't make a great living out of occupying that position—while you sometimes get the feeling that French intellectuals can. They seem to be a protected species, and the government will allow them their little space to say paradoxical things. Each English intellectual has to invent a position for themselves, one that they occupy in a fairly isolated way and take the ridicule that follows. In a sense, they are a minority, like any other. Whatever background the person who is an intellectual comes from, it could be compared to being disabled or from a racial minority in that if you are overt about it and proud about it, you would draw aggressive negative comments, I think.

Don't you think being an intellectual requires having a sort of status?

There is a status, within the academy. If you take philosophers, for example, there are a lot of sub-groupings within philosophy, and a moral philosopher would want to have status within the moral philosophy sub-group. If you seem to be speaking directly to the general public and publishing for them, however, that's not good for your academic profile. If you publish your PhD thesis and a serious book once every couple of years on

your subject, books which are only aimed at the people that study and teach that subject, that's fine. If you do a popular book and you appear on TV, then you become a media don and, again, an object of contempt.

What would you say of the specific case of Will Self, he is a "pop intellectual," he is an intellectual but at the same time forms part of popular culture.

But he doesn't hold an academic position. You have to look at someone like Lisa Jardine or Marina Warner or John Carey or someone like that; Germaine Greer is probably the best known intellectual—although she is Australian, she is not British—with an academic position, but she also appeared on Big Brother. So therefore, within academia, within her part of the academy, that would be very much seen as not the done thing. How do you relate all those things—appearing on Big Brother and being a kind of media figure—to being an intellectual? It is interesting; it seems to be stretching some of the boundaries. I don't think that the situation, until now, has brought intellectuals together. But the threat to the funding of university Humanities Departments is such that this may now happen. There has to be an attempt towards a coherent response, and a defense of why these places keeping going. But that has to make the ideological case. A utilitarian view of the economy is actually nonsensical. The truth is that you have parts of the economy that function through what would blandly be called "creativity." In other words, making things up for the fun of them. But these may, in the end, turn out to have a social value. Most people would have looked at what Bill Gates was getting up to in the mid-seventies, fiddling around on computers, and they would have said that he was wasting his time. The people who kick around on the periphery, seemingly doing something that isn't going to pay off, can become very quickly the central pillars of the economy. And likewise big companies, like Enron, disappear in a matter of months.

What do you think is the role of the intellectual today? Do you think they should have any political commitment?

I can't generalise about them, because I don't think there is a "them" in that simple way. I spend a lot of time analyzing what my position is or should be, and it doesn't necessarily make it easy to turn it into political action. I have always had a problem connecting the two things, thinking and political action—thinking whether or not what I was doing was the best thing, politically. If people started to think about why they think

things, or the ways in which they make arguments to themselves, and gained a sense of how to think about thinking—that could only be useful because a great deal of cultural investment has gone into the idea of authenticity through victimhood. Being the victim of your life-experience. Certainly within American society if you haven't lived it you can't really speak about it. There's a real worship of the idea of the street, where any knowledge comes from having suffered in some way. That is the great message of Winfrey Oprah—knowledge as life-experience is suffering—and the second message is that You Can Change Your Life, meaning, of course, You Can Change Your Life During The Course Of This TV Programme—if you love who you are, because what you are is enough. And I do think that that is a lesser way of engaging with being a person than the old Socratic "Know Thyself," which involves analyzing what the person you are is, analyzing how you can hold the opinions you do, and thinking outside your own experience. Because if you think beyond that, you can only be a product of it. In other words, you will be a victim of your victimhood, as well. You won't own it. You won't be able to do anything with it. You will just continue in the position that other people have put you in. And one of the strongest gestures a person could make now, publicly, would be to be the victim of something but to say, "I don't want to engage with being a victim. I am going to let it go. I am going to step away from this." This is how it works in the media now—if someone has had, say, a relative that is dying in hospital, and the treatment has been inadequate, what will happen is that that person will be put up against the government Minister or the person who nominally is an intellectual on a TV news programme, to debate whatever the issue is, say, hospital funding, and you will have the bureaucrat saying very coldly "we don't have the money to afford this kind of treatment. We can't give this kind of cancer treatment," and then you have the relative, the victim, someone who the producer hopes is going to cry, or get very emotional, and their role is to make the point "Yes, but my father died" or "Yes, but my child died because of this." And that's really the level that debate takes place on—each figure just carrying out their assigned role, with the victim having to get upset in a particular way. If you could try to get through to people in an intellectual way, so they could read this moment in a more critical way—and see how an agenda of emotion and victimhood, individual victimhood as opposed to a kind of structural engagement with the whole thing, negates any real thinking about it, and not just having a little micro debate about something that actually is not the real issue in any way—that would be socially useful. The counter-argument is, "Surely you are going to lose people as

soon as you start using these words. You are not really going to be able to make a TV programme that takes apart the structures of these things, and if you do it won't be seen by many people." But it would be a useful thing to do. If people are always told that their personal experience is the best way for them to judge things then they're incredibly easy to con. If you tell them to go beyond their own experience, beyond their own current opinions, and they start to investigate this idea, they immediately become less easy to con.

Why do you think there is a shortage of political writers nowadays?

What I feel defines my generation is that we have learned the lessons of other generations without having made the mistakes of those generations. For example, the 1930s generation of writers and intellectuals who made "the mistake" —and I am using that word in inverted commas—of Marxist commitment, and a deep belief of the Soviet Union as the future. W.H.Auden and Stephen Spender spent the rest of their lives dealing with having politically been like that, and moving to a sound Anglican position in Auden's case, and to a more socialist position in Spender's case. The lesson my generation takes from this isn't good: if you commit yourself to the moment, to polemic, then you write disposable trash. Look at the writers and artists who committed themselves so wholeheartedly, and then it all turned out to be a let down. I think there are two things to take into account here. One: there is the embarrassment of commitment, particularly commitment to a particular political moment, and two: there is a kind of aestheticised version of that. If you do become an engaged writer you will write disposable writing. You look at someone like Arundhati Roy who seems to all extent of purposes have made the decision to write disposable writing on the service of political causes of the moment rather than to write the great Indian novel—there is a general aversion to that kind of thing. But there are strong arguments against this. For example, George Orwell. He did write specific responses to specific political situations and moments which have lasted as writing. But critics often sneer about him. He is someone who is clearly a classic but can be, at the same time, sneered at as a novelist—in terms of a writer who isn't great at writing scenes in novels, dialogue in novels, etc.

George Orwell lived at a time when politics was characterised by ideological definition. Today, we can, in all likelihood, say that things have changed. Some writers have defined the New Labour government as the first postmodern government, could that be because of this lack of ideological definition within a historical perspective?

I think that is taking them among their own terms too much and allowing them to say what ideology is. This is not very subtle. When I went to live in Prague in 1990 they had taken down most of the posters and banners, there were a very few red stars around, "Workers of the World Unite" had disappeared from the shop windows. But in the same places there slowly appeared brand advertisements for Kronenberg beer and for Coca Cola. Nike's ads slogan "Just Do It" is as ideological as "Workers of the World Unite." There is no difference in the level of ideological radioactivity between those things. This is despite the fact that Nike, as a company, would deny they are engaged in the business of ideology in the same way that the Marxist-Leninist government of Czechoslovakia was. What are the messages that people are getting from these non-ideological companies and corporate structures, or from them in alliance with governments? Particularly throughout Thatcherism and Blairism, "choice" was a very key word: choose the hospital you go to for your treatment because you will be able to read a rating for that hospital which will reduce that hospital down to how many stars it gets. Choose your electricity supply, your water supply—even if you only have one set of pipes, one set of wires coming into your house. There is no longer a monopoly on this. Therefore, you sell off state industry, you privatise them, you create shareholders within those industries, you take those structures away from public ownership and they become market-driven institutions, entities, which shifts them entirely. If that is not ideological, if that is not deeply political, I fail to see what it is. I think those things, which have been taken out of public ownership and control, and will never be able to be retrieved, are some of the more tragic instances of how ideology has played outs—and Blairism continued this trend rather than reversed it.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH LUKE MARTELL

As I sit with professor and expert Luke Martell in his office, at the University of Sussex (Brighton) on 13 October 2011, I have the opportunity to converse with him about contemporary politics, more concretely about New Labour and Blair's legacy after he left Number 10 in 2007. We talked about Blair's achievements and failures, what he will probably be remembered for, and his political influences—like American politics, and Third Way thinker Anthony Giddens. We also dealt with the importance of media relations under New Labour, and the strong influence of Blair's collaborators such as Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell. We ultimately considered Blair's heritage from a historical perspective: how much did the Labour Party, the government and the country change during his premiership?

As you already know my dissertation is an analysis of Blairism and the role of intellectuals during his premiership. I am interested in Blair's legacy, what he left behind him. How can we judge Blairism from a historical perspective? Can we say it was a positive era for Britain?

Well, I think it was mixed. It was positive and negative. I think that historically, it sort of confirmed the economic aspects of Thatcherism, because she [Margaret Thatcher] has been around for about twenty years or something and instead of breaking with that sort of economic policy of neoliberalism, it confirmed it and carried it on. So I think that was quite an important historical thing: the Thatcher era was continued. But I think in terms of education, health, social provisions and so on, it saved some things, it saved schools, especially the school system—perhaps not Higher Education—and the health service, which were in danger I think. And it sort of saved them by just basically spending a lot of money on it, money that previously, you know, had declined a lot. As a British citizen you could see immediately, well within a year or two, three or four years, that education and health was improving again. So yes, I think economically it continued Thatcherism; socially it made a big change. But the thing about social health and education is that it is easily reversible. And I guess politically, there was this Devolution of power in Britain to the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies, which was quite significant, and that can be quite a lasting thing because now they have different

policies about tuition fees at universities and other things. And that will be very difficult to reverse, I think. There are probably other things, but those are the main things.

Do you think the changes that took place during the Blair years were irreversible? Were those changes, mainly concerning his detachment from Old Labour, perdurable changes? Or perhaps now with the new leader Ed Miliband there is a need to look backwards? Do you think those changes that Blair made in the party, in the government and in the country were irreversible?

Well, I don't think anything is irreversible, because everything can be reversed. But the change in the Labour Party was quite a big one I think. I mean, it had been happening before Blair: the Labour Party becoming more and more towards the centre and more and more towards the right. And Ed Miliband is trying to distance himself from New Labour a bit, but I mean I am not sure whether he is much that different, to be honest, or if this is rhetoric. Small differences maybe, differences in tone more than in natural substance. Blair made some changes to the party which enabled him to do what he wanted to do more easily.

So he definitely changed the Labour Party… but how much has Britain changed with New Labour?

It has changed constitutionally, I guess I might be repeating myself, but it has changed constitutionally quite a bit. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have got much more power and autonomy than they used to have. But of course the other thing is, like we talked about before, the problems in Northern Ireland are much better than they were before Blair came to power. And possibly they may never be as bad as they were before. I mean, that problem might be not solved. So how has Britain changed? I am not sure, I think he has confirmed the neoliberal aspects of Britain, so that hasn't changed neoliberalism, it has reinforced it when he was in power. As I said it has changed social infrastructure, but I am not sure whether that has changed Britain, perhaps that has changed Britain temporarily.

Comparing it to the Thatcher years, has it changed? Does Britain have better living standards now than the country used to have during Thatcherism?

Well, it was definitely the economy that was much better in the Blair years, but I think that was perhaps not completely his responsibility, because globally the economy was going quite well in that whole period. The standards of living certainly improved, the standards of social provision improved, definitely. It has possibly partly to do with the fact that business did have quite confidence in the government which is very unusual for the Labour Party; I have never known that to be the case for business being confident. That was a big change I think. So yes, standards of living improved, for a while, but we are now in a position where everyone here says that people in their eighteen, nineteen, twenty and twenty one are probably going to have a worse life than their parents. And that has got something to do with what happened before David Cameron came to power. You know, like the student debt, and things like that, and New Labour put that on the agenda before Blair came along; education was totally free, and he introduced tuition fees. So yeah, I think standards of living were better when they were in power. But I don't think that is going to continue, I think it is a bad period for a long time now.

Let's compare the beginning of the Blair years and the end of his premiership, the time when he left government. How do you remember that 1 May 1997 when Blair came into office?

It was fantastic, it was fantastic for the whole country, it was a really exciting day, I mean we had a huge vote, we had an absolutely massive vote of historical proportions. Mrs Thatcher had been in power for so long, and John Major retired afterwards, and the whole thing about him being young, different; at the time he felt like a new sort of politician, he had been brought up in the sixties, the new generation, the youth culture, rock music and all that sort of stuff. Yes, the atmosphere for the first six months or a year was historical in Britain, I think. It felt like a new era. I am not sure whether it was though. So yes, it was a very positive feeling at that period, I think. For that first year or two there was definitely this real sense that economic individualism wasn't the most important thing, that being compassionate and social was ok. And if like me, you worked in the public sector or you worked not for a private company, under Mrs Thatcher you felt like you were the enemy, and under Blair you felt like you weren't the enemy any more, it is not like you were massively supported but school teachers, nurses, all those people felt like they were no longer the enemy.

From the intellectual perspective, for example professors at University in this case, as you say they were the enemy during the Thatcher years but there was a kind of feeling that they were not the enemy anymore under Blair, do you think intellectuals at University supported or reacted against Blair as they did with Thatcher?

The world in the university did not really change all that much during that period, because all his focus on education was focused on schools and literacy and young children; but they introduced the £1,000 fees for students which now looks like a massive change because the fees have gone up and up and up. At the time, people were a bit unhappy about that, but mostly the university sector stayed the same, all the way through. So in terms of our working conditions and everything, he increased the number of students, massively I should say. You know the classes have got bigger and bigger but the world of the university did not change that much, although looking back you can see some of the changes he made, which would lead later on to big changes. But at the world of the intellectual, I don't really think it's sort of changed, I mean there were people like Anthony Giddens when he came along and he was supposed to be a big influence.

Were intellectuals at University pro-New Labour or did they react against him at some point?

I think he was quite popular at first because Mrs Thatcher was so unpopular for being in power for quite a long time and intellectuals tend to be more to the left. She was also a bit unpopular because she didn't seem very intellectual herself, she seemed like she governed with her instincts, and she was very populist. I guess intellectuals don't like that sort of thing, they were more rational, perhaps a bit more elitist unfortunately, and Blair seemed to be more like an educated, intellectual sort of person. I think intellectuals were a bit more positive under Blair. And it did seem like he was thinking about what he was doing, so yes, I think it was more positive at first, definitely.

Do you think intellectuals' support was wrecked at some point? Were they disappointed?

I wouldn't say it was wrecked, I mean, things like Iraq damaged his relationship with everybody, but especially with the intellectuals who tend to be a bit more pacifist than the population as a whole. And now lots of people look back and think he started the big problems for the universities or the new tuition fees. So I wouldn't say it was wrecked,

but certainly I would say it became weakened for some things like Iraq and tuition fees. And lots of intellectuals had children at school and they went to hospital and they felt the improvements in their lives as ordinary people. I don't think it was really wrecked but definitely eroded a bit.

Now, thinking of the end of his premiership, how can we explain Blair's fall?

Lots of people say it had to do with Iraq, and the fact that he, you know, this claim that he lied about the Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq: that is the obvious explanation which lots of people would give, that was the real thing that really damaged him. But I am not really sure whether that did because if you look at the opinion polls he was still quite popular. He had been in power a long time, and anybody that is in power for a long time has trouble maintaining it. And then, there was this personal split within the party leadership between him and Brown and their two supporters that everyone in the public knew as a problem, it was obvious there were problems. So I am not sure whether there was something really big, something like Iraq, or politics, I am not really sure whether it's about politics, or it is policy or it is rolling government, or that sort of things which are so damaging. I think it was just like boring things, like being in power for a long time, and he was just falling out with people who previously got on well with him, you know. I think it was quite a mundane thing, so that was my feeling anyway.

So in your opinion, there wasn't a decisive historical event that made Blair lose power, but merely too much time in power and people getting bored of him.

Yes, basically, and internal political problems in the party, because he never actually lost an election, he left the leadership of the Labour Party, which he promised Brown he would do anyway (although he was a bit slow in doing it than he said). The last election he stood in, he actually did quite well, everyone thought he would get a terrible result because of Iraq, but he did reasonably well. And when it came to the economy and public services all the opinion polls showed that people trusted him.

In which side of the political spectrum would you place Blair?

One of the things here in Britain is that the centre is a bit different to other European countries. So the centre is a bit more towards the right here than it is in other countries, I think. So when he was in power he was more right-wing than others; so compared to

other European countries he is quite right-wing. In the British context I would say economically he was to the right, but socially he was to the left.

Do you think he followed a particular political ideology? Or was he, as many say, non-ideological?

I don't think he was non-ideological, I think he was a mixture of ideologies basically: economically he was neoliberal, he just thought he got to be friendly to business, and in globalisation this is really important, you have to attract capital and so on; socially, he was a compassionate person, he cared about the poor, he cared about the working poor, he was sympathetic to the young people who were working and in that way he was sort of quite left-wing. I can't say he was non-ideological because he didn't make decisions pragmatically as he went along, he did have some guiding principles. So I think he was ideological, but there was not a clear ideology but a mixture of ideologies. I think people who say he used to be pragmatic are wrong, because he did stick to certain ways of doing things.

What's the relationship between Blair's ideology or mixture of ideologies, and the "Third Way" theory? Was he influenced by Anthony Giddens's "Third Way"?

He decided, as I was saying, that he was economically neoliberal and socially compassionate, then he had to find a way to describe it, and the "Third Way" was a good way of describing it. He had to talk to his party, he had to say to his party—because his party was always saying that you always had to be economically left-wing and socially left-wing—and he was saying, no, you can be economically neoliberal and socially compassionate, so he had to find a way of saying that to his party, and he came with this phrase of "Third Way." I think the Third Way that he advocated was different in many ways to what Giddens advocated. I think he used Giddens as a way of making himself sound more intellectual than he really was. I am not sure if Giddens, as far as I am aware, did really talk to Blair, they might have met and talked. The Third Way was something Blair used to explain what he was doing, and I think he decided to do it in that way before he had any ideas about the Third Way.

How can we define the "Third Way"?

For both of them it was a sort of saying that you don't have to be totally left-wing or totally right-wing. You can mix them in a Third Way in the middle. Both Blair and Giddens were saying that the Third Way was a new type of politics, which wasn't true because it was the old type of politics mixed up. But it was new in the sense that they were saying you don't have to be on the one side or the other. Giddens's Third Way is quite similar in the sense that he said we have to be economically liberal and we have to be socially compassionate, but Giddens was also quiet into a different type of individualism, I think. Blair thought at be economically individualistic at profit-making himself; but, for instance, Giddens's idea of individualism was much more about choosing what family you want to belong to, choosing your value system, reflexivity, and I don't think Blair was very interested in all that stuff. He wasn't supportive towards him so this stuff about lifestyle, and social movements and cultural individualism, I don't think Blair was interested in that, and I think Giddens was. So Giddens in Germany had this idea that we are living in this culture of irreflexivity, risk, choice, and post-traditionism; and that was part of the Third Way.

Wasn't the Third Way a strategy to please everybody?

Definitely, in the early days of the Blair years there was that sort of thing about what class basis was going to have, because the industrial working class was shrinking and shrinking, so they had to extend their base, their electoral base. So was it "Mondeo man"? "Mondeo man" they called it, it is a type of car which is for the upper working-class people who had quite good incomes and could afford quite a nice car, and live outside London and Essex and places like this, in suburban areas. And they were saying we need to appeal to these people, and they were saying these people are socially conservative, they believe in a traditional family, they don't like crime, and criminals, and they are also economically liberal. So yes, I think the Third Way was a way of appealing to those values, we can't just be egalitarian all the time. It's partly to do with winning elections, although I think Blair believed in it, because one of his speeches, which was quite funny, right at the beginning he said at the Labour Party Conference "You think I am just doing all these things to win votes, you think I am being right-wing to win votes, you think I am appealing to the family and against criminals to win votes, the thing is I actually believe in this sort of thing". And everyone laughed, you know. So it was partly political, but I think he actually believed in it as well.

There has always been a special relationship between different governments and the media, they need each other, and they have common interests to keep their power and their influence. Do you think the media manipulation, all about spin and lobbying during the Blair years was real or exaggerated?

He certainly took the whole spinning communications media beside of him, it was much more serious than in any other previous Labour leader, and Mrs Thatcher clearly took it seriously. I think before Mrs Thatcher politicians didn't really pay much attention to the media, I mean, a bit, but it wasn't really a big thing and she took it quite seriously. I think it was Peter Mandelson, his communications director, back at the beginning before he became a politician, who pushed the whole idea of the Labour Party spinning stories to the media to the top of the agenda. I think one of the first things Blair ever did when he became leader was the following: within a few days he flew to Australia to go and visit Rupert Murdoch, and that caused a lot of anger in the Labour Party because Rupert Murdoch was the enemy, and Blair was saying, you know, we have to talk to this man. And there was the whole thing about *The Sun*, there was this myth in Britain which is not really true, whoever *The Sun* says should win the elections will win the elections, and they supported Blair. Yes I think he used media strategy a lot, I don't think it was just all appearance; I think there was a real substance with what he did.

Was there an evident break with the past in terms of media relations?

Yes, very seriously, they won a lot of the right-wing press over to them, business leaders, *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, they all liked Blair and that's never happened with a Labour leader before. And that is because he worked quite hard I think; and because he shifted to the centre politically.

Do you think this shift in the importance of media relations is, again, irreversible, in the sense that David Cameron's current government will reproduce this "special relationship"?

No, I think it has become problematic because Cameron's media relations have become questioned, because of his press director, I can't remember his name now, but he has the same role as Campbell did, and because of the whole phone hacking and stuff. I think Cameron has to be really careful now about being too close to the media, because obviously if you are a politician you have to appeal to the media. It means that to win the media to your side you have to do a far greater distance than before. I think before it

was visiting the editors of the newspapers in their offices promising to help them in certain ways, I think the relationship is different now. So the media is still important, but politicians have to handle it in a more distant way. They have to be much more careful.

Alastair Campbell or Peter Mandelson worked very closely with Tony Blair, how do you think they influenced Blair?

I think everybody who was involved in it had a huge influence. That was one of the problems, one of the criticisms was that, you know, the government was run by Blair, Mandelson and Campbell, and Mandelson and Campbell weren't elected, so there was a lot of controversy. Mrs Thatcher had a lot of advisers who weren't elected and she was criticised for that, quite a bit. I think everybody who was involved in the Labour circles said that, you know, Campbell was the person who could talk to the Prime Minister easiest, he was ahead of Brown, he was ahead of everybody, so yes, they had a big influence on Blair, not only on media strategy but also on policy, everything was a really big issue, I think.

It has been said that Blair made politics less accountable. Can we say that the Blair government was somehow "presidential"?

Definitely yes. Lots of people were saying that the cabinet became much less significant, it's a big controversy about the cabinet–government, I mean there were lots of reports of Blair's decisions being announced by the cabinet which were heard in the newspapers first, because Blair had made them himself with his advisers. So yes definitely a presidentialisation of politics.

This presidentialisation of politics is in accordance with the influence of American politics, do you think there was a kind of influence from American politics on Blair, especially with Clinton and the modernisation of the party?

Definitely yes, Brown and various other people, Mandelson and Campbell went to America before they won the elections, so they actually visited them and their visit was about how to win an election. Welfare policy was very close to Clinton's welfare policy, you know, Clinton's was called "workfare," but this all thing about welfare being attached to work which is quite a new thing here. Here to get welfare benefits you are supposed to look for work, but it wasn't really seriously. So definitely the welfare

policy was very similar to Clinton's policy. And the whole idea of the Third Way and modernisation, and moving to the centre, so yes, I think so. Some people, Giddens for instance, said they had to do more with Sweden than America. Because Sweden's long time welfare policy is about getting people into the workforce rather than just allow them to stay on welfare benefits all the time. So maybe the Americanisation is exaggerated, but definitely there is this whole thing that the British have a special relationship with America: our culture, we are individualistic, we speak the same language, we have the same legal system that has always been a sort of theme in British politics, and it's this similarity.

Blair always said he wanted to be the "bridge" between Europe and America but in the end it seemed that he prioritised Britain's relationship with the United States. Why do you think Britain always looks up at America and the American politics as a reference?

I think there are two reasons: one reason is what I have just given, which is that there are similarities between Britain and America, which are stronger between Britain and American than with other European countries. You know, based on economic individualism, the legal system, language—perhaps that's less important than twenty years ago, the language was quite important—and these sorts of things, so there are obviously cultural similarities. So that's one: the cultural, legal, political similarities, economic similarities between the countries. But I think the other reason is—we talked about this last time—that thing about Britain's imperial past: Thatcher with the Falklands war, and Blair with the Iraq war wanted to maintain some sort of imperial world status for Britain, which it had lost fifty years ago, a hundred years ago. And one way of doing that is to hang on with America, be America's ally, because Britain in Europe is probably the third most important power at the best after France and Germany obviously—it's perhaps lower than that because it is less involved in Europe than other countries, so it was a bit marginalised in Europe and I think it was just a way of maintaining their sense of imperial power, and often that relationship with America is a military one as well, so yes I think it was partly to do with that.

And when it comes to Europe, was New Labour more pro-European than its predecessors?

They were definitely more pro-European, well they probably didn't seem like that to other people in other European countries, they probably still seem quite anti-European, but definitely. We signed the Social Chapter straightaway; when Blair was elected there was a new European Minister, he had a hangover because he had been in party all night and Blair said to him that night: you get on the first plane tomorrow to sign the Social Chapter, so on 1 May he was on the plane, and you can see his hair sticking up. I mean Blair was still quite sceptical in the sense he was aware of the national interest, and he had a much more productive, positive relationship with other European leaders, it made a big change. Mrs Thatcher was against everything all the time when the negotiations happened. So yes, he was definitely more pro-European.

Why do you think Britain and the British people have always been reluctant and distant towards Europe?

I think there are lots of reasons: one reason is because this thing with America, there was torn between America and Europe. There are other reasons but they can sound sort of silly, the fact that being an island makes a kind of difference. My grandparents, for instance, they went out of Britain once, and it's partly because it's quite a big thing to get out of the country, because you had to go across the water in a plane or a boat. So I think it's partly America, it's partly the physical sort of thing, I think it is also partly because of the Empire thing again, Britain saw as a country by itself and it didn't see itself as a part of a wider entity.

To wrap up and conclude this interview, I would like to finish by remembering Blair's achievements and failures, what do you think we will remember Blair for?

Well, I think what he did in Northern Ireland was a big achievement, although I don't think many people really think about that, and I think he will be remembered for that. But people don't talk about it very much. He basically ended the war, effectively, in Northern Ireland. Although it still breaks out a little bit down there, people who were killing each other would talk to each other and now they are governing together, so that was a really big achievement. I think he did rescue the economy, the education, the school education and the health service, while it was in big danger at the time. If the Tories were in power again in 1997 the funding would have been cut drastically. That

was a big achievement. The economy was quite buoyant throughout the whole period but that was not completely down to him, but partly. And the constitutional thing is quite important, and that is going to be very difficult to change now, so it shocked down the Scottish Assembly. I think the whole of the Iraq thing was just a disaster, lots of people were dying and they were horrified by this mass slaughter, he lost so many people and I think that was so terrible. I think Afghanistan was a bit different, but Iraq was definitely a disaster. That's what he will probably be remembered for most, because it came towards the end, and it was a big world thing. He saved the social infrastructure, the constitutional stuff and Northern Ireland those were the big things together with the reaffirmation of Thatcherism as an economic programme again.

Inequality got much worse, when you are talking about public infrastructure, inequality grew in Britain, and the rich got very rich, and the people who were poor and didn't have jobs got much poorer because his welfare strategy to deal with poverty was focused on work. He was criticised for that, for all being work-centred: so the poor who didn't have work, actually got worse. And about the importance of image and appearance in politics under New Labour—and I know about this so postmodern thing where the appearance becomes more everything and substance disappears and there is a big gap sometimes—one of the things I liked about him was that he was authentic. I thought his appearance matched the substance. I mean I know there was a lot of spinning and so on, but I thought he was real, and I think that was quite an unusual thing for a politician, because what he said was what he actually did. I mean the classic image of politicians is that you write a manifesto, and when you get into government you do a completely different thing. If you look at his manifesto in 1997, that's what they did. I think the way he presented himself was honest; I think he was refreshing in that sense, which isn't to say he didn't put a lot of emphasis into presentation.

AN INTERVIEW WITH BLAKE MORRISON

I sit with professor and novelist Blake Morrison in his office at Goldsmith College, London, on 16 November 2011.

Throughout the whole twentieth century there have been important politically committed figures. It has been said that the late twentieth century has witnessed a decrease of political writers, what was called "the death of the intellectual." It seems that nowadays it's difficult to find voices committed to their times. Do you agree with this statement?

That's a big question. I don't think so, I think for instance in Britain in the thirties, particularly everybody looked to George Orwell as an example; he himself was a critical intellectual in many ways because he was an *auteur* intellectual and he is a kind of model for the British: "The engaged British writer" which isn't to say that he represents the left because it is a very complicated position that Orwell had. However, I think in our own time, there are similar figures, to take one obvious example is Christopher Hitchens, sometimes compared with Orwell, could be seen as following something of the same trajectory, starting very much on the left and moving to the right, but whatever he writes there is a fierce political and polemical engagement. Yes, it is sometimes said that the British anyway lack an intelligentsia, compared with other European countries. I will take a small example, at the moment we are seeing protest movements around the world, anti-capitalist demonstrations; when I was coming into college last week, there was a sociology lecturer with a lot of fellow students, he was joining them, demonstrating against the tuition fees system. I think we will find in universities that there is still that kind of committed intellectual, and maybe it is not on the face of it, like in the nineteen sixties and late sixties, in terms of lectures, you know, that fiercely write on and fiercely engage. But there are still intellectuals, yes.

Who are the British intellectuals nowadays?

Well, it's difficult to know, but did you see the *Observer* list, the *Observer* newspaper, there is a list of 300 intellectuals, there weren't enough women on the list, there were plenty of people from various disciplines who were there. I find it a very difficult

question, and my mind goes blank. I am not going to name names but you have a range from the columnists in newspapers, so you buy *The Guardian* and you have Jonathan Freeland who writes about British and European politics, and in particular Israel-Palestine, we have Simon Jenkins, you have Polly Toynbee, so you have a series of columnists in the press, tomorrow it will be Timothy Garton Ash. I call that "Intellectuals" even though some people may think that journalists are not intellectuals, you have university professors who are intellectuals, you have people in the arts, and either through their work and independently of their work, take up causes protesting against this, campaigning against that, write letters here, movements there, so you know I think it's difficult to name names, but there are a lot of intellectual people engaged in the intellectual life in this country.

E. P. Thompson defined the "intellectual" not as a group of academics or writers, but as academic and writers who were politically committed to their times, politically engaged and who represented a dissident force, opposed to power. Would you agree?

Yes, I do, I think we all expect intellectuals to take, at the very least, a critical position in relation to power and relation to their government. In other words, to be resistant to the press releases, the spin, the way the government tries to present something. At the very least they are critical and have a sceptical kind of intelligence brought to their government. But better than that, of course, they are oppositional, actually, suspicious of any power and authority, prepared to protest, not just in writing but through action.

How about yourself? Do you consider yourself a political/engaged writer?

How about myself? I am not a paid up member of any party, political party. I have certainly in my writing tried to influence the way people think, I have written poetry that tries to combat misogyny, and this sort of feminist input behind it, I have talked about a case involving two ten-year old children who killed a child; well I tried to make people see that it's wrong to put ten-year old children on trial in a public court, to actually get the age of criminal responsibility raised, because it's very low, I don't know how it is in Spain, here it's ten, but more easily in Europe is sixteen, eighteen years old. So I have in my writing tried to argue for change and protest against what I see is injustice, I have tried to do other things: be entertaining and funny, or whatever. Not always propagandist, but sometimes I have tried to change things.

In your opinion, what's your role as a writer? Or generally speaking, what's the role of a writer?

I think in my case it's various from book to book, I have written poetry, fiction, memoirs, in each one it's got a different function and purpose, essentially the job of the writer is to share light and understanding. A writer can put you inside, in the place of someone else, so I may be able to inhabit your head and understand what you are thinking and feeling through imaginative projection, and that is a huge and very important resource in the world, because how do we break misunderstanding between people? How do we stop misunderstanding that lead to war and divisions? We do need writers, not just writers, but writers among them, who break down its barriers, you know, explain the different ways that people are, the different reasons that they have. So I think empathy is important; so often war begins because people have irrational prejudices against an "enemy," and because people despair compromising and negotiation is being a way forward. I think writers can combat misunderstanding, I also think they say, look, there's still room for compromise, there's room for negotiation, there's room to understand, there's room to arrive at a shared position, we persist, so writers offer at best the example of olive branch rather than weapons. In addition, I would also like to say that the writer, the intellectual, has a sense of history, because so often it's the lack of the sense of history that makes people, you know, repeat mistakes, and that's why the role of the writer is important, in that way.

In the late historical period of New Labour, could you suggest or name some key political figures of the time, figures that showed a systematic political commitment against the New Labour government?

Ok, it always depends on the kind of paper you read. There's Nick Cohen, he writes for the *Observer*, and also he writes for the *Observer* was Henry Porter, and I would say they were quite throughout their time oppositional at that time, the thing is you know that obviously most columnists, and writers at some point react, but nobody makes it a full time job, a critique to government, otherwise people stop listening to them. But there are people who have written books, I mean John Rentoul, he wrote a book on Blair and New Labour, I am sure. And also *Blair's Wars* by John Kampfner.

How about Terry Eagleton?

Well Terry Eagleton was initially a Marxist critic, he is quite complicated, he is still a Marxist, I would say, he has written a book on Marx but he has still got quite into his Catholic background, I would say he's been an intellectual of our time and quite an influential one.

Is* South of the River *a political novel?

I did not intend *South of the River* to be a propagandist or polemical novel—one in which an author pushes his ideology. My purpose was, rather, to reflect the texture of the times, the first five years of Tony Blair's New Labour government. None of the characters is especially engaged in politics—not in their work at least. They have ideas about politics, like we all do, but they don't have jobs in politics. So I suppose my novel both is and isn't political—it's set in a particular political era, but it doesn't preach.

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEFAN COLLINI

I sit with British academic and intellectual Stefan Collini in his office at the University of Cambridge on 12 December 2011. I converse with him about the state of contemporary intellectuals, about their role in society, and how the classical notion of intellectual has recently changed. We also deal with Tony Blair and New Labour, and how intellectuals reacted when he was firstly elected in 1997 until when he finally left office in 2007.

Who are the intellectuals today? How would you define the term "intellectual" in our contemporary culture? And what is their role?

I don't like definitions; I don't like to label things because we can actually find many different definitions of the term "intellectual." However, they are normally figures from a creative background. Nowadays we very easily come across the term "public intellectual" (it has a USA origin), referring to all those academics that cross over to a wider public commenting about policies. Also, it would be interesting to have a look at the magazine *Prospect* where you can find a list of 100 intellectuals published in 2008 I think. They include all kinds of people: from the traditional version of intellectuals to journalists. As I can see in your list you mention Julie Burchill and Jeremy Paxman, but they are journalists, they are TV commentators. Others such as Harold Pinter and Hanif Kureishi, they were writers who later found an opportunity to deal with politics. Many of the people mentioned on your list are journalists; many of these people are not intellectuals, but personalities. As for the role of the intellectual, there is not one single role of the intellectual; any role is valid according to what they do: writing in newspapers, doing theoretical analysis, collaborating in street protests…

As you know I am looking for some concrete intellectual voices that were particularly interested in criticising New Labour. Could you recommend some names?

It is difficult to find only five or six figures. However, you could categorise all these intellectuals, group them according to their professional background, such as, for example, novelists, academics, journalists, and freelance intellectuals like Terry Ali and

Perry Anderson who have been quite productive in some journals: *New Left Review* and *London Review of Books*. About journalists it would be interesting to make some comments or analyses on the condition of the contemporary journalist, in the sense that they don't report the news any more, rather they have become active in the debate of current issues, and they are columnists who make public statements: they are called "the commentariat."

Another different way of organising intellectuals for your thesis would be, on the one hand chronologically, and on the other, for publications in journals such as *The Guardian, London Review of Books, New Left Review*…

My advice to select these intellectuals would be… Just try to be pluralist, do not try to find five or six concrete figures who criticised or reacted against Blair's policies, but try to reflect the spirit of the age with diversity, representing all the voices that participated in the debate of British contemporary culture: the culture of individualism, celebrities…. Try to mention the shifting boundaries between journalists, celebrities and academics in contemporary culture. Even try to think of those intellectuals who were active during the Thatcher years, they may have been still active a decade later, for example Brian Harrison's *Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals*, you can start there. Also Stuart Hall, Terry Ali, Ross McKibbin, Anthony Giddens, he was the house intellectual of Blair government; perhaps Linda Colley (she did not write much about Blair but she participated in the debate of National Identity), also journalists such as Polly Toynbee, she is not an intellectual but I do recommend analysing what she said.

What was the reaction of intellectuals as for Blairism was concerned?

Well, we find this curve of disappointment considering the beginning and the end of Blair in Number 10. There was a turning point which was the Iraq War, which definitely politicised the public opinion. Since his coronation in 1997, there were increasing stages of criticism throughout his tenure.

What do you think Tony Blair will be remembered for? Which were his major achievements and failures?

From the perspective of the Labour Party we have to consider that they lost many elections until 1997, they lost 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992 even though Labour thought

they would win this election. Then Blair arrived and he was a new young leader, he was one of the youngest prime ministers in history, he was in his early forties, and he was determined to position himself at the centre. So in 1997 people were delighted about the new government, there was an initial exhilaration because of the corruption in the previous conservative government, and the uncharismatic personality of John Major. There was a sense of a new beginning, with a young charismatic leader, good on TV, a good actor, he deliberately cultivated his image. Later there was disappointment about his policies for not being really "Labour;" however, he never intended to be on the left. His neoliberal approach, prioritising the City of London and the free market mechanism (the marketisation of the NHS, the University Fees), and Foreign Affairs such as the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq… It meant a change from the traditional Labour Party. Blair was the result of the successive defeats of the Labour Party, especially in 1992. So he made the party compatible with the capitalist system.

So to summarise, and from a historical perspective, firstly we can say that Blair will be remembered for making the Labour Party electable, he changed the Labour Party. It is important to mention that it was not only Blair, but his circumstances. The moment when Blair appeared things had already changed, it was not only Blair. Previously the Labour Party was the party of the unions, but trade unions had declined and Blair was not responsible for many of these changes. And secondly, Blair promoted an interventionist foreign policy (in the Balkans, in Iraq, Afghanistan…).

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AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD THYNNE

MEMBER OF THE TEAM MAKING *THE KILLING OF TONY BLAIR*

BY GEORGE GALLOWAY

*This was an e-mail interview held on 25 October 2013

When did you start this project?

We started the idea for this project around July, although the idea to make a documentary about Blair has been mentioned before that. We then began researching the possibilities of making it and how to fund it. We began the crowd-funding process at the end of August and we have now started the researching for the material of the film.

Why? What was the reason to make an anti-Blair film?

Many people in the UK and around the world feel that Blair is a war criminal. Firstly, he carried on the political legacy of Margaret Thatcher, even though he was supposed to represent the British Labour Party. He almost single-handedly turned the Labour Party into a second Conservative Party, therefore ruining the prospects for British working-class people for over a generation. But more importantly than that, he led us into a war with the USA in Iraq which was wholly illegal, which most people in the country didn't want and which as a consequence has made us, along with the United States, one of the most hated countries in the world, not only outside of the country but within our own country too.

Moreover, he stepped straight from his position as Prime Minister in Number 10 into a succession of highly-paid jobs, from which he lives extremely well in a number of large houses, the existence of which comes straight from the policies which he made. He created the environment in which he was able to make a lot of money for himself and it's a dangerous precedent. We felt that this story needed to be told, and who better to tell it than George? Blair kicked George out of the Labour Party after 36 years of membership for telling them world what they needed to know about Blair.

What will the film be about?

The title of the movie is a triple-entendre; firstly, Blair killed the Labour Party, he killed a million people in Iraq (and elsewhere) and now he's making a killing out of it all. This last point is what the focus of the film will be about: the money and the jet-set lifestyle he has made for himself. The first two parts of the answer are well documented, the third less well so. We are digging right to the bottom of the deep pit of immorality from which he extracts his wealth.

What do you think are the consequences of this film? Do you think the film is going to change people's perception about Blair?

The overarching aim of the film is to start a movement to get Blair indicted for war crimes, which most sane people can see he is guilty of. The most perfect situation would be to see him in a dock in The Hague, and for him to pay for what he has done. But we will firstly settle for exposing his crimes and his profiteering to as many people as possible, and I hope the film will do that. Hopefully we will see a big drive in public pressure on him as more people become aware of his dealings, and if the film achieves something in stopping him in his tracks, well then that will be the first step.

In a sense, most people already know about Blair's crimes in terms of Iraq. But I think his role since being Prime Minister is less well known. We are focusing mainly on this in the hope that people will realise what he is doing.

What are Blair's main mistakes? And his strengths?

Where do we start? He's a war criminal, in our opinion so the list of his mistakes is long. But fundamentally his main mistake is flying the Labour Party to destruction; everything else followed as a result of this. The Labour Party may never be the same again, and that's a more tragic legacy than many of the things he actually did achieve. Whether the British public know it or not, Britain is a much more intolerant place now because of his destruction of the Labour Party. His decision to launch a war in Iraq has isolated the Muslims in this country and the deliberate attempts to malign them as a community in order to justify the war which in itself was an attempt to align us more closely with George W. Bush's USA is a wound to the fabric of this country that will take decades to heal, if they will ever heal at all. He did have a number of strengths, otherwise he would never have been elected in the first place. But I'm afraid all of that has been washed away in the blood of his crimes.

APPENDIX III

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RESUMEN DE LA TESIS EN ESPAÑOL

Existe un pesimismo vigente acerca de la acción insurgente del intelectual contemporáneo, y, de acuerdo con la afirmación que estima la desaparición del intelectual hacia finales del siglo veinte, algunos autores han menospreciado la crítica que escritores, pensadores y otras figuras subversivas han demostrado en años recientes. La tan comentada *muerte del intelectual* parece haberse extendido en Europa, concretamente en Francia, ya que en Gran Bretaña, como muchas veces se ha mencionado, la acción política independiente del intelectual liberal nunca ha existido:

> No hay *intelligentsia* radical en Inglaterra si a ella nos referimos con el término de movimiento disciplinado, asociado a un programa sistemático de transformación política, económica y cultural, con fuertes raíces en el movimiento obrero organizado. Los radicales ingleses tienden a ser *declassé* y fuertemente individualistas. (Rojek, 2003: 26; mi traducción)

El desafío de la historia, con el colapso del régimen soviético, la caída del comunismo y la decadencia de la izquierda en los años ochenta—precisamente durante el esplendor neoliberal de gobiernos prototípicos como el de Reagan o el de Thatcher—supuso el desmantelamiento de los esquemas ideológicos establecidos, y el intelectual, que había estado particularmente vinculado a la izquierda, se encontró con el vacío de la acción política. Jean-François Lyotard, con su "Tombeau de l'intellectuel" (*Le Monde*, 1983), inició el ahora arraigado y desalentador discurso que identifica al intelectual subversivo con un mundo pasado. De ahí que críticos del siglo veintiuno contribuyeran a esta interpretación del intelectual contemporáneo: Terry Eagleton o Andrew Marr, entre otros muchos, se han sumado a la observación negativa de que el intelectual auténtico de izquierdas ha desaparecido (Marr, 1996; 2008).

Además, la idiosincrasia británica, muchas veces acusada de carecer de un radicalismo real, ha sido definida frecuentemente por un liberalismo burgués alienado de la clase trabajadora o del "otro dominado." Al escritor y pensador británico se le ha criticado por ejercer una oposición *contre-pouvoir*, a través de una literatura aparentemente subversiva, mientras reproducía inconscientemente su elitismo clasista y su conservadurismo dominante (Driscoll, 2009).

En ese sentido, y primero de todo, esta tesis doctoral ha tenido por objeto deconstruir la postura pesimista que establece que no existe el intelectual contemporáneo contra-hegemónico. Como se ha demostrado, a pesar de la afirmación de que el "gran pensador"—como se conocía al intelectual a lo largo del siglo veinte—se encontraba ante su inminente desaparición, otro tipo de intelectual ya había empezado a emerger. Existe, entonces, una visión más globalizadora y, si acaso, más optimista, de la acción política ejercida por voces públicas de la escena actual. Como Michel Foucault formuló, aunque el concepto del intelectual de antaño parece haberse extinguido gradualmente, nuevas voces empezaban ya a ejercer la función insurgente de lo que él consideró el intelectual anacrónico (Foucault, 1980: 129).

En segundo lugar, frente a la crítica que subestima la existencia del intelectual británico, este estudio pretende demonstrar que existen intelectuales operantes en Gran Bretaña y que han sido figuras funcionalmente capaces de elaborar textos en contra del poder establecido y de liderar acciones desafiantes al gobierno británico de principios del siglo veintiuno, concretamente, la hegemonía consolidada del gobierno de Tony Blair (1997—2007).

Con perspectiva histórica, tras los turbios años del Thatcherismo (una década bien conocida por la oposición categórica de los intelectuales de izquierdas ante la agitación social y los recortes en servicios públicos) los años noventa de John Major y Tony Blair simbolizaron el llamado "agotamiento de la vanguardia" (Luckhurst, 2005: 78), lo que concebía la nueva era de los noventa como una época de apatía política, del *pesimismo del intelecto* (Thompson, 2007) e incluso de una tímida aprobación al Nuevo Laborismo.

En este sentido, y en tercer lugar, el presente análisis ha tratado de responder a aquellas voces que afirmaban que a comienzos del siglo veintiuno y durante el mandato de Blair, el intelectual había dejado de ser opositor y contra-hegemónico: mientras en un principio hubo, efectivamente, un periodo de transición que distinguía al intelectual por la pasividad política y por unos instintos revolucionarios apaciguados, el gobierno de Blair pronto revertió la tendencia inspirando en la izquierda una crítica directa y contundente. El proyecto de modernización del partido Laborista y su transformación en lo que se denominó "Nuevo Laborismo, Nueva Gran Bretaña" causó entusiasmo por un lado, y apoyo escéptico por otro entre los intelectuales: a pesar del atisbo de conservadurismo embriónico que se vislumbraba en el proyecto de Tony Blair, existía la creencia generalizada que el Nuevo Laborismo era la mejor alternativa y la mejor oportunidad para echar a los Tories del poder.

Sin embargo, como se ha demostrado en este estudio histórico-cronológico de los intelectuales y el Blairismo, empezó a revelarse un desencanto temprano ante las políticas laboristas, ya que se hacía gradualmente evidente que el "Nuevo Amanecer"—como se conocía el surgimiento del Nuevo Laborismo—acabó siendo una continuación del Thatcherismo, haciendo que ese entusiasmo inicial pronto se convirtiera en frustración, indignación y desencanto entre los intelectuales del momento.

Por lo tanto, el objetivo de esta tesis doctoral ha sido, a través del análisis de un amplio número de voces contra-hegemónicas, constituir la primera sociología histórico-cultural de los intelectuales durante el gobierno de Tony Blair para así mostrar, por un lado, la curva de desencanto que los intelectuales liberales experimentaron a lo largo de los diez años de mandato del Primer Ministro, y por otro, contribuir a los discursos del estado de la *intelligentsia* opositora a principios de siglo veintiuno. Con este propósito, es necesario hacerse una serie de preguntas: ¿quiénes fueron los intelectuales subversivos que públicamente se opusieron e intentaron deconstruir el discurso Blairista? ¿Cómo realizaron esta oposición? ¿Qué textos elaboraron, qué acciones rebeldes llevaron a cabo? Y lo más importante, ¿por qué he considerado a los intelectuales aquí incluidos voces *contre-pouvoir*?

Edward Said dijo una vez que han existido numerosos estudios sobre la intelectualidad: sobre lo que significa ser intelectual y sobre cuál es el papel del intelectual contemporáneo. Sin embargo, añadió, no han habido suficiente análisis sobre lo que los intelectuales hacen para ser considerados como tales; para Said, no han habido "suficientes estudios sacados de la imagen, de la firma, de la intervención y acción real del intelectual, todo lo cual constituye el alma del intelectual auténtico" (Said, 1996: 13; mi traducción). ¿Qué es lo que hace el intelectual? Esta investigación ha pretendido responder la llamada de Said cuando cuestiona qué es lo que hacen los intelectuales para ser identificados como voces opositoras, y qué acciones concretas llevan acabo para oponerse al poder, concretamente, en este caso, en el contexto histórico del Blairismo. Asimismo, la presente tesis doctoral tiene por objeto reflejar la acción política y las intervenciones contra-hegemónicas de una selección amplia de intelectuales británicos que se opusieron a los efectos del proyecto político de Blair, y que representaron la resistencia política al gobierno establecido entre 1997 y 2007 en Gran Bretaña. Este estudio ha analizado quiénes fueron esos intelectuales opositores, a qué entorno profesional o artístico pertenecieron, y por qué han sido identificados como tales según las definiciones teóricas de tres filósofos de la intelectualidad: Antonio

Gramsci, Michel Foucault y Edward Said. El corpus de intelectuales aquí incluido ha sido analizado de acuerdo a su *funcionalidad* como voces subversivas y contra-hegemónicas, es decir, en relación a la disidencia funcional del intelectual que según Gramsci, Foucault y Said debía estar abiertamente y categóricamente opuesto al poder, y en este caso, a la política de Tony Blair.

Así pues, entre los capítulos que han configurado este análisis, podemos destacar el capitulo metodológico donde se detalla, por un lado, los criterios utilizados para seleccionar el corpus de intelectuales (las voces críticas) y los textos aquí incluidos; y por otro, la estructura teórica que coordina el análisis de todas estas figuras subversivas—como ya se ha mencionado, según las teorías de Gramsci, Foucault y Said. De igual forma, aunque el objeto de análisis ha sido determinar esa funcionalidad subversiva para identificar a los intelectuales aquí seleccionados, también ha sido necesario establecer unos criterios para la selección de los textos o productos culturales a través de los cuales estos intelectuales llevaron a cabo su acción política disidente. La diversidad de estos textos y/o acciones políticas responde a la naturaleza holística y globalizadora de este estudio. Desde esa perspectiva, es necesario entender la presente tesis doctoral desde la visión de los Estudios Culturales, los cuales legitiman el estudio interdisciplinar de una gran variedad de voces públicas y la naturaleza híbrida de estos textos.

Además del capítulo metodológico, otros dos capítulos han sido imprescindibles antes de llevar a cabo el análisis de los intelectuales y sus correspondientes textos. Por un lado, el capítulo tres representa una visión panorámica de la política de Tony Blair en sus años de gobierno. Para entender las reacciones de los intelectuales a ciertas reformas impuestas por el Primer Ministro, era necesario estudiar el Blairismo desde el comienzo del proyecto de Blair—el Nuevo Laborismo—el triunfo electoral en las urnas en 1997, sus tres legislaturas y su renuncia en 2007, una renuncia demandada por muchos dentro y fuera del partido. Como se explica en este capítulo, la modernización ideológica del partido—basada en la filosofía de la Tercera Vía—revertió la tendencia decadente y fallida del partido Laborista durante casi dos décadas, y lo convirtió en una entidad elegible que fue capaz de ganar hasta tres elecciones generales consecutivas (1997, 2001, 2005) haciendo de Labour el "partido natural del gobierno." A pesar de los logros iniciales que favorecieron la popularidad del Primer Ministro en su primera legislatura (principalmente el proceso de paz en Irlanda del Norte, y la delegación de poderes a Escocia y Gales), el nuevo partido Laborista se configuró como la

consolidación del modelo neoliberal, lo que convirtió al partido, según muchos estudiosos, en la continuación de la Revolución Thatcherista. Algunas medidas en asuntos internos—como su reforma de la educación y la sanidad—y otras decisiones polémicas—como fue la determinación de Blair de unirse a Estados Unidos en la guerra de Iraq—provocaron una crítica feroz no solo entre los británicos sino también entre la esfera intelectual y artística, revelando el desencanto generalizado de aquellos que habían sido afines al partido.

Muchas voces públicas criticaron lo que ellos consideraron que eran las injusticias del gobierno de Blair, pero sobre todo criticaron aquellas decisiones que contradecían la ética social y moral que previamente había nutrido la ideología del partido. Estas reacciones subversivas continuaron la crítica existente de muchos intelectuales del siglo veinte quienes, generalmente hablando, contribuyeron al desmantelamiento de los discursos de poder en diferentes momentos históricos. El capítulo cuatro representa un estudio panorámico de los intelectuales británicos a lo largo del siglo veinte, con una pequeña introducción a lo que ha empezado a ser el intelectual del siglo veintiuno. Partiendo de la creencia romántica de que solo el escritor del pasado o los escritores extranjeros—como es el caso francés del *intellectuel*—constituyen el modelo auténtico de intelectual contra-hegemónico, el escritor británico contemporáneo deja, para algunos, mucho que desear. Tras estudiar la larga tradición de la *intelligentsia* británica durante el siglo pasado, se puede deducir que incluso aquellos intelectuales idealizados del ayer también fueron fuente de controversia y crispación entre sus coetáneos debido a contradicciones e incoherencias en sus discursos. Esto no va a ser diferente en la actualidad del intelectual del siglo veintiuno cuando estos escritores y pensadores, también personalidades de la escena artística y cultural, son descalificados por su desobediencia simple, por su crítica vulgar o demasiado popular en algunos casos, o por su carácter burgués en otros.

En este sentido, y a pesar de las contradicciones que han mostrado muchos de los intelectuales contemporáneos aquí analizados, estos ejercieron una crítica directa al asentamiento irreversible del Thatcherismo, y reaccionaron contra lo que ellos consideraron que era la traición de Blair a los principios de verdad, justicia y democracia que muchos de estos pensadores defendían. Por tanto, en el capítulo cinco se ha analizado un corpus de aquellos escritores de ficción que se opusieron al gobierno de Blair y a sus discursos oficialistas y hegemónicos. Estos escritores reaccionaron ante la modernización que Blair inició en el partido en los noventa no solo a través de su

literatura, sino también a través de otras declaraciones públicas como entrevistas o ensayos. La sátira temprana y otras formas de crítica periodística de estos escritores—Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, Margaret Drabble, Harold Pinter, y Fay Weldon—constituyen las primeras muestras de crítica intelectual al joven Primer Ministro, un Primer Ministro que a pesar de su popularidad, suscitó el descontento entre escritores liberales o afines a la izquierda.

La segunda legislatura de Blair con sus reformas en la agenda doméstica también provocó la oposición de otros escritores, en este caso de ficción popular o comercial como Sue Townsend y Jonathan Coe quienes denunciaron que los efectos de las reformas de Blair estaban dañando los servicios públicos, poniendo en duda, al fin y al cabo, la naturaleza Laborista del Primer Ministro. Sin embargo, sería la guerra de Iraq el acontecimiento que más oposición suscitó en la sociedad británica: académicos, expertos, escritores y pensadores coordinaron respuestas colectivas para oponerse a la guerra, y otros reflejaron su descontento a través de su literatura. Ese fue el caso de Sue Townsend y Robert Harris, quienes denunciaron la ilegalidad de la invasión en sus novelas de ficción popular. Ian McEwan, sin embargo, permaneció escéptico ante la guerra, y su postura ambigua y a veces defensora de la obligación moral de los países occidentales para con los pueblos oprimidos le posicionaba más en un lado hegemónico que antagónico con respecto al poder poco democrático del Nuevo Laborismo.

Ya hacia finales del mandato de Blair, otra serie de escritores se manifestaron en contra de lo que ya empezaba a ser el legado del Primer Ministro, fuertemente criticado por pensadores liberales de prestigio como Hanif Kureishi o David Hare, y otras nuevas voces que más se identificaban con la ficción comercial como Blake Morrison, Richard T. Kelly o, de nuevo, Sue Townsend. En sus diferentes novelas y obras de teatro analizaron e ilustraron la frustración generalizada con lo que había llegado a ser el Blairismo.

En general, y como se ha visto en el análisis de todas estos escritores literarios, se puede concluir que dentro de la gran variedad de opiniones y grados de compromiso político entre todos ellos, algunos destacan bien por su activismo político radical, o bien por su indulgencia con el gobierno británico a pesar de haber sido, previamente, voces particularmente asociadas a la izquierda. Harold Pinter, por ejemplo, sería el intelectual y el activista por excelencia en su denuncia casi irracional y enfurecida ante las políticas de Blair. Por otro lado, encontramos a escritores como el *enfant terrible* Martin Amis que, habiendo estado anteriormente asociado a la *intelligentsia* liberal, parecía haberse

transformado en un admirador inconsciente del Primer Ministro. Junto con Ian McEwan, estos dos escritores serán los más compasivos y condescendientes con la postura hegemónica del gobierno, un gobierno que parecía haber dado un giro radical a la derecha.

Asimismo, también se puede concluir que con respecto al resto de voces literarias incluidas en este capitulo, muchas de ellas pertenecientes al mundo de la ficción popular o comercial y paralelamente figuras de clase media con cierto confort socio-económico (algunos fueron autores millonarios de *best-sellers*) no dudaron en presentar una oposición directa y contundente a la política de Blair. ¿Y no es contradictorio que escritores de clase media como estos lideraran la lucha contra-hegemónica durante el gobierno de Blair? En este sentido, puedo concluir que a pesar de las contradicciones e incoherencia que existía entre su crítica política y su acomodación social, estos funcionaron con efectividad como voces opositoras que intentaban deconstruir y debilitar el poder de Blair: su condición de clase media no les inhabilitaba para ejercer una postura subversiva.

El siguiente capítulo de análisis, el capitulo seis se ha centrado en aquellos críticos y teóricos de izquierdas que también reaccionaron ante la modernización del partido Laborista y su hasta entonces popular filosofía de la Tercera Vía. Estos teóricos revisionistas de la social democracia, y antiguos comunistas—Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques o Eric Hobsbawm—ya habían augurado la necesidad de una modernización del partido para poder ganar las elecciones, razón por la que estos teóricos apoyaron la candidatura de Blair en las urnas en 1997. Sin embargo, una vez que el Nuevo Laborismo empezó a tomar forma en el gobierno, rápidamente se retractaron y expresaron su desencanto con la alternativa Blairista. Otros analistas como Andrew Marr, Alex Callinicos, Will Hutton, David Marquand, Tony Judt y Roy Hattersley, junto con los colaboradores de la revista *Marxism Today* (1998) también contribuyeron a deconstruir los pilares teóricos sobre los cuales se había constituido el Blairismo. Estos denunciaron que el socialismo de Blair estaba fundado en el neoliberalismo Thatcherista, en la privatización de servicios públicos y en la aceptación del estado de mercado y los efectos de la globalización. Más tarde, Iraq también supuso el enfrentamiento de estos intelectuales con el gobierno: analistas políticos y periodistas como Simon Jenkins, Polly Toynbee, Hugo Young y John Gray se unieron a otras voces que criticaban al gobierno Laborista por sus decisiones poco democráticas y su arrogancia en el parlamento.

En definitiva, todos estos autores—teóricos, críticos y periodistas—personificaron el desencanto directo y la crítica categórica al proyecto de Blair, ya que era evidente el creciente conservadurismo de su filosofía. En este sentido, la nueva figura intelectual antagónica al gobierno parecía ser un tipo híbrido de intelectual que, en su resistencia casi colérica al Blairismo, fluctuaba entre las áreas de la teoría política y los medios de comunicación de masas: mientras que muchos de estos periodistas acabaron elaborando ensayos para revistas académicas de prestigio, los teóricos marxistas ahora colaboraban con periódicos más populares.

Finalmente, el capítulo siete analiza otras manifestaciones artísticas y culturales que también respondieron críticamente al gobierno. Como en los dos capítulos previos, este análisis cronológico de las reacciones subversivas a la política de Blair examina también el entusiasmo inicial que Blair inspiró en las artes, concretamente en el rock británico de los noventa: el fenómeno de la "Cool Britannia," íntimamente asociado al nacimiento del llamado Britpop con grupos como *Blur* y *Oasis*, encarnó el optimismo generalizado entre artistas y personalidades de la industria musical. Sin embargo, el desencanto inicial apareció cuando estos músicos tomaron conciencia de que el gobierno había utilizado el mundo de las artes y la cultura para ganar unas elecciones y mantenerse en el poder. Otras figuras como los cineastas Stephen Frears, Richard Loncraine, o Armando Iannucci, así como otros artistas de la escena visual como es la viñeta política de Steve Bell utilizaron sus películas, series de televisión y sus caricaturas para ilustrar y denunciar a un Primer Ministro muy ambicioso, oportunista y poco democrático que encarnaba el lema del "poder por el poder."

Por lo tanto, con el objetivo de mostrar que otras formas de acción subversiva son posibles al margen de la intelectualidad establecida y erudita, estos otros productos culturales han sido incluidos en la presente tesis doctoral. Así se ha demostrado la función contra-hegemónica del arte popular no solo cuando participa en la crítica política de su tiempo, sino también al deconstruir la ideología dominante y los discursos oficiales del Blairismo. Con la intención de defender la funcionalidad de diversas formas de crítica política—desde la literatura más erudita, hasta la ficción popular, desde la teoría política hasta el periodismo, desde el cine hasta la música pop—este estudio ha mostrado que a pesar de que existieron muchas voces eruditas aún activas en los debates políticos contemporáneos, otras voces nuevas han emergido, en cuanto a su *status*, en esa función disidente y contra-hegemónica que antes había sido ejercida por la figura del "gran pensador." El hecho de considerar a escritores de ficción popular, a

periodistas y a músicos con fuerte arraigo popular de la escena pop como figuras opositoras emergentes en la intelectualidad contemporánea no quiere decir que previamente no existieran periodistas, músicos o escritores comerciales que fueran antagónicos al poder establecido, pero estas figuras aquí reflejadas sí que han emergido en *status* como voces legítimamente válidas para ejercer la *función* contra-hegemónica ante un gobierno determinado.

Por lo tanto, estoy en la posición de concluir que, a pesar de que algunos críticos han determinado que el intelectual es una especie en extinción, los intelectuales en Gran Bretaña existen, y, como se ha demostrado, han estado participativamente involucrados en la vida política de su país interviniendo, con sus análisis críticos, en la deconstrucción del discurso hegemónico Blairista. La desaparición del intelectual político solo es posible para aquellos cuyas altas expectativas les llevan a idealizar la figura del escritor del siglo veinte, y para aquellos que valoran a los escritores de hoy en día solo por sus contradicciones y su incoherencia. Como se ha detallado a lo largo de este estudio, ni si quiera los intelectuales del siglo veinte están exentos de crítica por sus coetáneos, siendo criticados por ser contradictorios, por ser burgueses o por reproducir prejuicios de clase contra los que ellos mismos reaccionan. El intelectual del siglo veintiuno, al menos el que ha sido políticamente operativo durante el mandato de Tony Blair, no carecía de crítica en este sentido, y aún así, encarnó la disidencia política al poder existente a través de una gran variedad de textos, productos culturales y otras acciones políticas. El intelectual británico del siglo veintiuno, justo hasta el año 2007 como aquí se ha analizado, puede ser identificado por su oposición al abuso de poder por parte del gobierno Laborista de Blair, por el abandono de las demandas sociales del mismo partido, y por la manipulación de la verdad para permanecer en el poder en ultima instancia. Por lo tanto, el nuevo intelectual aún mantiene una visión crítica intrínseca a la *función* que ejerce como intelectual, pero es el nuevo *status* del intelectual lo que le ha hecho recientemente invisible o ser desprestigiado. El intelectual del siglo veintiuno no puede ser juzgado a través de patrones anacrónicos, por el contrario, necesita ser reconocido en sus nuevas formas y significaciones, teniendo en cuenta el momento histórico y cultural en la que se encuentran.

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